



00078226

CALIFORNIAN STORIES

78226 *ju*

BY

~~3438~~

BRET HARTE



London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1884

Good
823
Har/Cal
78226

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.



00078226

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
JEFF BRIGGS'S LOVE STORY.	7
PETER SCHROEDER	94
THE TWINS OF TABLE MOUNTAIN ...	115
VIEWS FROM A GERMAN SPION ...	177

JEFF BRIGGS'S LOVE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

It was raining and blowing at Eldridge's Crossing. From the stately pine trees on the hill-top, who were dignifiedly protesting through their rigid spines upward, to the hysterical willows in the hollow, who had whipped themselves into a maudlin fury, there was a general tumult. When the wind lulled the rain kept up the distraction, firing long volleys across the road, letting loose miniature cataracts from the hill sides to brawl in the ditches, and beating down the heavy heads of wild oats on the levels; when the rain ceased for a moment the wind charged over the already defeated field, ruffled the gulleys, scattered the spray from the roadside pines, and added insult to injury. But both wind and rain concentrated their energies in a malevolent attempt to utterly disperse and scatter the "Half-way House," which seemed to have wholly lost its way, and strayed into the open, where, dazed and bewildered, unprepared and unprotected, it was exposed to the taunting fury of the blast. A loose, shambling, disjointed, hastily-built structure—representing the worst features of Pioneer *renaissance*—it rattled its loose window-sashes like chattering teeth, banged its ill-hung shutters, and admitted so much

of the invading storm, that it might have blown up or blown down with equal facility.

Jefferson Briggs, proprietor and landlord of the "Half-way House," had just gone through the formality of closing his house for the night, hanging dangerously out of the window in the vain attempt to subdue a rebellious shutter that had evidently entered into conspiracy with the invaders, and, shutting a door as against a sheriff's *posse*, was going to bed—i.e. to read himself asleep, as was his custom. As he entered his little bed-room in the attic with a highly exciting novel in his pocket and a kerosene lamp in his hand, the wind, lying in wait for him, instantly extinguished his lamp and slammed the door behind him. Jefferson Briggs relighted the lamp, as if confidentially, in a corner, and shielding it in the bosom of his red flannel shirt, which gave him the appearance of an illuminated shrine, hung a heavy bear skin across the window, and then carefully deposited his lamp upon a chair at his bedside. This done, he kicked off his boots, flung them into a corner, and rolling himself in a blanket, lay down upon the bed. A habit of early rising, bringing with it, presumably, the proverbial accompaniment of health, wisdom, and pecuniary emoluments, had also brought with it certain ideas of the effeminacy of separate toilettes and the virtue of readiness.

In a few moments he was deep in a chapter.

A vague pecking at his door—as of an unseasonable woodpecker, finally asserted itself to his consciousness. "Come in," he said, with his eye still on the page.

The door opened to a gaunt figure, partly composed of bed-quilt and partly of plaid shawl. A predominance of the latter and a long wisp of iron-gray hair determined her sex. She leaned against the post with an air of fatigue, half moral and half physical.

"How ye kin lie thar, abed, Jeff, and read and smoke on sich a night! The sperrit o' the Lord abroad over the yearth—and up stage not gone by yet. Well, well! it's well thar ez *some* ez can't sleep."

"The up coach, like as not, is stopped by high water on the North Fork, ten miles away, Aunty," responded Jeff, keeping to the facts. Possibly not recognizing the hand of a beneficent Creator in the rebellious window shutter, he avoided theology.

"Well," responded the figure, with an air of delivering an unheeded and thankless warning, "it is not for *me* to say. P'raps it's all His wisdom that some will keep to their own mind. It's well ez some hezn't narves, and kin luxuriate in terbacker in the night watches. But He says, 'I'll come like a thief in the night!'—like a thief in the night, Jeff."

Totally unable to reconcile this illustration with the delayed "Pioneer" coach and Yuba Bill, its driver, Jeff lay silent. In his own way, perhaps, he was uneasy—not to say shocked—at his aunt's habitual freedom of scriptural quotation, as that good lady herself was with an occasional oath from his lips. A fact, by the way, not generally understood by purveyors of Scripture, licensed and unlicensed.

"I'd take a pull at them bitters, Aunty," said Jeff feebly, with his wandering eye still recurring to his page. "They'll do ye a power of good in the way o' calmin' yer narves."

"Ef I was like some folks I wouldn't want bitters—tho' made outter the simplest yarbs of the yearth, with jest enough sperrit to bring out the vartooes—ez Deacon Stoer's Balm 'er Gilcad is—what yer meaning? Ef I was like some folks I could lie thar and smoke in the lap o' idleness—with fourteen beds in the house empty, and nary lodger for one of 'em. Ef I was that indifferent to havin' invested my fortin

in the good will o' this house, and not ez much ez a single transient lookin' in, I could lie down and take comfort in profane literatoor. But it ain't in me to do it. And it wasn't your father's way, Jeff, neither!"

As the elder Briggs' way had been to seek surcease from such trouble at the gambling table, and eventually, in suicide, Jeff could not deny it. But he did not say that a full realization of his unhappy venture overcame him as he closed the blinds of the hotel that night; and that the half desperate idea of abandoning it then and there to the warring elements that had resented his trespass on Nature, seemed to him an act of simple reason and justice. He did not say this, for easy-going natures are not apt to explain the processes by which their content or resignation is reached, and are therefore supposed to have none. Keeping to the facts, he simply suggested the weather was unfavourable to travellers, and again found his place on the page before him. Fixing it with his thumb, he looked up resignedly. The figure wearily detached itself from the door-post, and Jeff's eyes fell on his book. "You won't stop, Auntie?" he asked mechanically, as if reading aloud from the page; but she was gone.

A little ashamed, although much relieved, Jeff fell back again to literature, interrupted only by the charging of the wind and the heavy volleys of rain. Presently he found himself wondering if a certain banging were really a shutter, and then, having settled in his mind that it *was*, he was startled by a shout. Another, and in the road before the house!

Jeff put down his book, and marked the place by turning down the leaf, being one of that large class of readers whose mental faculties are butter-fingered, and easily slip their hold. Then he resumed his

boots and was duly caparisoned. He extinguished the kerosene lamp, and braved the outer air and strong currents of the hall and stairway in the darkness. Lighting two candles in the bar-room, he proceeded to unlock the hall door. At the same instant a furious blast shook the house, the door yielded slightly and impelled a thin, meek-looking stranger violently against Jeff, who still struggled with it.

"An accident has occurred," began the stranger, "and——" But here the wind charged again, blew open the door, pinned Jeff behind it back against the wall, overturned the dripping stranger, and, dashing up the staircase, slammed every door in the house, ending triumphantly with No. 14, and a crash of glass in the window.

"Come, rouse up!" said Jeff, still struggling with the door, "rouse up and lend a hand yer!"

Thus abjured, the stranger crept along the wall towards Jeff and began again, "We have met with an accident." But here another and mightier gust left him speechless, covered him with spray of a wildly disorganized water-spout that, dangling from the roof, seemed to be playing on the front door, drove him into black obscurity and again sandwiched his host between the door and the wall. Then there was a lull, and in the midst of it, Yuba Bill, driver of the "Pioneer" coach, quietly and coolly, impervious in water-proof, walked into the hall, entered the bar-room, took a candle, and, going behind the bar, selected a bottle, critically examined it, and returning poured out a quantity of whiskey in a glass and gulped it in a single draught. All this while Jeff was closing the door, and the meek-looking man was coming into the light again.

Yuba Bill squared his elbows behind him and rested them on the bar, crossed his legs easily and

awaited them. In reply to Jeff's inquiring but respectful look, he said shortly:

"Oh, you're thar, are ye?"

"Yes, Bill."

"Well, this yer new-fangled road o' yours is ten feet deep in the hollow with back water from the North Fork! I've taken that yar coach inter fower feet of it, and then I reckoned I couldn't hev any more. 'I'll stand on this yer hand,' sez I; I brought the horses up yer and landed 'em in your barn to eat their blessed heads off till the water goes down. That's-wot's the matter, old man, and jist about wot I kalkilated on from those durned old improvements o' yours."

Colouring a little at this new count in the general indictment against the uselessness of the "Half-way House," Jeff asked if there were "any passengers?"

Yuba Bill indicated the meek stranger with a jerk of his thumb. "And his wife and darter in the coach. They're all right and tight, ez if they was in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. But I reckon he allows to fetch 'em up yer," added Bill as if he strongly doubted the wisdom of the transfer.

The meek man, much meeker for the presence of Bill, here suggested that such indeed was his wish, and further prayed that Jeff would accompany him to the coach to assist in bringing them up. "It's rather wet and dark," said the man apologetically; "my daughter is not strong. Have you such a thing as a waterproof?"

Jeff had not; but would a bear skin do?

It would.

Jeff ran, tore down his extempore window curtain, and returned with it. Yuba Bill, who had quietly and disapprovingly surveyed the proceeding, here disengaged himself from the bar with evident reluctance.

"You'll want another man," he said to Jeff, onless ye can carry double. Ez *he*," indicating the stranger, "ez no sort o' use, he'd better stay here and 'tend bar,' while you and me fetch the wimmen off. Specially ez I reckon we've got to do some tall wadin' by this time to reach 'em."

The meek man sat down helplessly in a chair indicated by Bill, who at once strode after Jeff. In another moment they were both fighting their way, step by step, against the storm, in that peculiar, drunken, spasmodic way so amusing to the spectator and so exasperating to the performer. It was no time for conversation, even interjectional profanity was dangerously exhaustive.

The coach was scarcely a thousand yards away, but its bright lights were reflected in a sheet of dark silent water that stretched between it and the two men. Wading and splashing they soon reached it, and a gulley where the surplus water was pouring into the valley below. "Fower feet o' water round her, but can't get any higher. So ye see she's all right for a month o' sich weather." Inwardly admiring the perspicacity of his companion, Jeff was about to open the coach door when Bill interrupted.

"I'll pack the old woman, if you'll look arter the darter and enny little traps."

A female face, anxious and elderly, here appeared at the window.

"Thet's my little game," said Bill, *sotto voce*.

"Is there any danger? where is my husband?" asked the woman impatiently.

"Ez to the danger, ma'am,—thar ain't any. Yer ez safe *here* ez ye'd be in a Sacramento steamer; ez to your husband, he allowed I was to come yer and fetch yer up to the hotel. That's his look-out!" With this cheering speech, Bill proceeded to make two or three ineffectual scoops into the dark interior,

manifestly with the idea of scooping out the lady in question. In another instant he had caught her, lifted her gently but firmly in his arms, and was turning away.

"But my child!—my daughter! she's asleep"—expostulated the woman; but Bill was already swiftly splashing through the darkness. Jeff, left to himself, hastily examined the coach: on the back seat a slight small figure, enveloped in a shawl, lay motionless. Jeff threw the bear skin over it gently, lifted it on one arm, and gathering a few travelling bags and baskets with the other, prepared to follow his quickly disappearing leader. A few feet from the coach the water appeared to deepen, and the bear skin to draggle. Jeff drew the figure up higher, but in vain.

"Sis," he said, softly.

No reply.

"Sis," shaking her gently.

There was a slight movement within the wrappings.

"Couldn't ye climb up on my shoulder, honey? that's a good child!"

There were one or two spasmodic jerks of the bear skin, and, aided by Jeff, the bundle was presently seated on his shoulder.

"Are you all right now, Sis?"

Something like a laugh came from the bear skin. Then a childish voice said, "Thank you, I think I am!"

"Ain't afraid you'll fall off?"

"A little."

Jeff hesitated. It was beginning to blow again.

"You couldn't reach down and put your arm round my neck, could ye, honey?"

"I am afraid not!"—although there *was* a slight attempt to do so.

"No?"

"No!"

"Well, then, take a good holt, a firm strong holt, o' my hair! Don't be afraid!"

A small hand timidly began to rummage in Jeff's thick curls.

"Take a firm holt; thar, just back o' my neck! That's right."

The little hand closed over half a dozen curls. The little figure shook, and giggled.

"Now don't you see, honey, if I'm keerles with you, and don't keep you plumb level up thar, you jist give me a pull and fetch me up all standing!"

"I see!"

"Of course you do! That's because you're a little lady!"

Jeff strode on. It was pleasant to feel the soft warm fingers in his hair, pleasant to hear the faint childish voice, pleasant to draw the feet of the enwrapped figure against his broad breast. Altogether he was sorry when they reached the dry land and the lee of the "Half-way House," where a slight movement of the figure expressed a wish to dismount.

"Not yet, Missy," said Jeff; "not yet! You'll get blown away, sure! And then what'll they say? No, honey! I'll take you right into your papa, just as ye are!"

A few steps more and Jeff strode into the hall, made his way to the sitting-room, walked to the sofa, and deposited his burden. The bear skin fell back, the shawl fell back, and Jeff—fell back too! For before him lay a small, slight, but beautiful and perfectly formed woman.

He had time to see that the meek man, no longer meek, but apparently a stern uncompromising parent, was standing at the head of the sofa; that the

elderly and nervous female was hovering at the foot, that his aunt, with every symptom of religious and moral disapproval of his conduct, sat rigidly in one of the rigid chairs—he had time to see all this before the quick, hot blood, flying to his face, sent the water into his eyes, and he could see nothing!

The 'cause of all this smiled—a dazzling smile though a faint one—that momentarily lit up the austere gloom of the room and its occupants. "You must thank this gentleman, 'papa," said she, languidly turning to her father, "for his kindness and his trouble. He has carried me here as gently and as carefully as if I were a child." Seeing symptoms of a return of Jeff's distress in his colouring face, she added softly, as if to herself, "It's a great thing to be strong—a greater thing to be strong *and* gentle."

The voice thrilled through Jeff. But into this dangerous human music twanged the accents of special spiritual revelation, and called him to himself again. "Be ye wise as sarpints, but harmless as duvs," said Jeff's aunt, generally, "and let 'em be thankful ez doesn't aboos the stren'th the Lord gives 'em, but be allers ready to answer for it at the bar o' their Maker." Possibly some suggestion in her figure of speech reminded her of Jeff's forgotten duties, so she added in the same breath and tone, "especially when transient customers is waiting for their licker, and Yuba Bill hammerin' on the counter with his glass; and yer ye stand, Jeff, never even takin' up that wet bar skin—enuff to give that young woman her deth."

Stammering out an incoherent apology, addressed vaguely to the occupants of the room, but looking toward the languid goddess on the sofa, Jeff seized the bear skin and backed out of the door. Then he flew to his room with it, and then returned to the bar-room; but the impatient William of Yuba had charac-

teristically helped himself and gone off to the stable. Then Jeff stole into the hall and halted before the closed door of the sitting-room. A bold idea of going in again, as became the landlord of the "Half-way House," with an inquiry if they wished anything further, had seized him, but the remembrance that he had always meekly allowed that duty to devolve upon his aunt, and that she would probably resent it with Scriptural authority and bring him to shame again, stayed his timid knuckles at the door. In this hesitation he stumbled upon his aunt coming down the stairs, with an armful of blankets and pillows, attended by their small Indian servant, staggering under a mattress.

"Is everything all right, Auntie?"

"Ye kin be thankful to the Lord, Jeff Briggs, that this didn't happen last week when I was down on my back with rheumatiz. But ye'r never grateful."

"The young lady—is *she* comfortable?" said Jeff, accepting his aunt's previous remark as confirmatory.

"Ez well ez enny critter marked by the finger of the Lord with gallopin' consumption kin be, I reckon. And she, ez oughter be putting off airthly vanities, askin' for a lookin'-glass! And you! trapsin' through the hall with her on yer shoulder, and dancin' and jouncin' her up and down ez if it was a ball-room!" A guilty recollection that he had skipped with her through the passage struck him with remorse as his aunt went on: "It's a mercy that betwixt you and the wet bar skin she ain't got her deth!"

"Don't ye think, Auntie," stammered Jeff, "that—that—my bein' the landlord, yer know, it would be the square thing—just out o' respect, ye know—for me to drop in thar and ask 'em if thar's anythin' they wanted?"

His aunt stopped, and resignedly put down the pillows. "Sarah," she said meekly to the hand-maiden, "ye kin leave go that mattress. Yer's Mr. Jefferson thinks we ain't good enough to make the beds for them two city women folks, and he allows he'll do it himself!"

"No, no! aunty!" began the horrified Jeff; but failing to placate his injured relative, took safety in flight.

Once safe in his own room his eye fell on the bear skin. It certainly *was* wet. Perhaps he had been careless—perhaps he had imperilled her life! His cheeks flushed as he threw it hastily in the corner. Something fell from it to the floor. Jeff picked it up and held it to the light. It was a small, a very small, lady's slipper. Holding it within the palm of his hand as if it had been some delicate flower which the pressure of a finger might crush, he strode to the door, but stopped. Should he give it to his aunt? Even if she overlooked this evident proof of *his* carelessness, what would she think of the young lady's? Ought he—seductive thought!—go downstairs again, knock at the door, and give it to its fair owner, with the apology he was longing to make? Then he remembered that he had but a few moments before been dismissed the room very much as if he were the original proprietor of the skin he had taken. Perhaps they were right; perhaps he *was* only a foolish clumsy animal! Yet *she* had thanked him—she had said in her sweet childlike voice, "It is a great thing to be strong; a greater thing to be strong and gentle." He *was* strong; strong men had said so. He did not know if he was gentle too. Had she meant *that*, when she turned her strangely soft dark eyes upon him? For some moments he held the slipper hesitatingly in his hand, then he opened his trunk, and disposing various articles around it as if

it were some fragile, perishable object, laid it carefully therein.

This done, he drew off his boots, and, rolling himself in his blanket, lay down upon the bed. He did not open his novel—he did not follow up the exciting love episode of his favourite hero—so ungrateful is humanity to us poor romancers, in the first stages of their real passion. Ah, me! 'tis the jongleurs and troubadours they want then, not us! When Master Slender, sick for sweet Anne Page, would “rather than forty shillings” he had his “book of songs and sonnets” there, what availed it that the Italian Boccacio had coteremporaneously discoursed wisely and sweetly of love in prose? I doubt not that Master Jeff would have mumbled some verse to himself had he known any; knowing none, he lay there and listened to the wind.

Did she hear it; did it keep her awake? He had an uneasy suspicion that the shutter that was banging so outrageously was the shutter of her room. Filled with this miserable thought, he arose softly, stole down the staircase, and listened. The sound was repeated. It was truly the refractory shutter of No. 7—the best bedroom adjoining the sitting-room. The next room, No. 8, was vacant. Jeff entered it softly, as softly opened the window, and leaning far out in the tempest, essayed to secure the nocturnal disturber. But in vain. Cord or rope he had none, nor could he procure either without alarming his aunt—an extremity not to be considered. Jeff was a man of clumsy but forceful expedients. He hung far out of the window, and, with one powerful hand, lifted the shutter off its hinges and dragged it softly into No. 8. Then as softly he crept upstairs to bed. The wind howled and tore round the house; the crazy water-pipe below Jeff's window creaked, the chimneys whistled, but the shutter banged no more.

Jeff began to doze. "It's a great thing to be strong," the wind seemed to say as it charged upon the defenceless house, and then another voice seemed to reply, "A greater thing to be strong and gentle;" and hearing this he fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

It was not yet daylight when he awoke with an idea that brought him hurriedly to his feet. Quickly dressing himself, he began to count the money in his pocket. Apparently the total was not satisfactory, as he endeavoured to augment it by loose coins fished from the pockets of his other garments, and from the corner of his washstand drawer. Then he cautiously crept downstairs, seized his gun, and stole out of the still sleeping house. The wind had gone down, the rain had ceased, a few stars shone steadily in the north, and the shapeless bulk of the coach, its lamps extinguished, loomed high and dry above the lessening water, in the twilight. With a swinging tread Jeff strode up the hill and was soon upon the highway and stage road. A half-hour's brisk walk brought him to the summit, and the first rosy flashes of morning light. This enabled him to knock over half a dozen early quail, lured by the proverb, who were seeking their breakfast in the chapparal, and gave him courage to continue on his mission, which his perplexed face and irresolute manner had for the last few moments shown to be an embarrassing one. At last the white fences and imposing outbuildings of the "Summit Hotel" rose before him, and he uttered a deep sigh. There, basking in the first rays of the morning sun, stood his successful rival! Jeff looked at the well-built comfortable structure,

the commanding site, and the air of sereno independence that seemed to possess it, and no longer wondered that the great world passed him by to linger and refresh itself there.

He was relieved to find the landlord was not present in person, and so confided his business to the bar-keeper. At first it appeared that that functionary declined interference, and with many headshakings and audible misgivings, was inclined to await the coming of his principal, but a nearer view of Jeff's perplexed face, and an examination of Jeff's gun, and the few coins spread before him, finally induced him to produce certain articles, which he packed in a basket and handed to Jeff, taking the gun and coins in exchange. Thus relieved, Jeff set his face homewards, and ran a race with the morning into the valley, reaching the "Half-way House" as the sun laid waste its bare bleak outlines, and relentlessly pointed out its defects one by one.

It was cruel to Jeff at that moment, but he hugged his basket close and slipped to the back door, and the kitchen, where his aunt was already at work.

"I didn't know ye were up yet, Aunty," said Jeff, submissively. "It isn't more than six o'clock."

"Thar's four more to feed at breakfast," said his aunt, severely, "and yer's the top blown off the kitchen chimbley, and the fire only just got to go."

Jeff saw that he was in time. The ordinary breakfast of the "Half-way House," not yet prepared, consisted of codfish, ham, yellow-ochre biscuit, made after a peculiar receipt of his aunt's, and potatoes.

"I got a few fancy fixins up at the Summit this morning, Aunty," he began, apologetically, "seein' we had sick folks, you know—you and the young lady—and thinkin' it might save you trouble. I've got 'em here," and he shyly produced the basket.

"If ye kin afford it, Jeff," responded his aunt resignedly, "I'm thankful."

The reply was so unexpectedly mild for Aunt Sally, that Jeff put his arms around her and kissed her hard cheek. "And I've got some quail, Aunty, knowin' you liked 'em."

"I reckoned you was up to some such foolishness," said Aunt Sally, wiping her cheek with her apron, "when I missed yer gun from the hall." But the allusion was a dangerous one, and Jeff slipped away.

He breakfasted early with Yuba Bill that morning; the latter gentleman's taciturnity being intensified at such moments through a long habit of confining himself strictly to eating in the limited time allowed his daily repasts, and it was not until they had taken the horses from the stable and were harnessing them to the coach that Jeff extracted from his companion some facts about his guests. They were Mr. and Mrs. Mayfield, eastern tourists, who had been to the Sandwich Islands for the benefit of their daughter's health, and before returning to New York, intended, under the advice of their physician, to further try the effects of mountain air at the "Summit Hotel," on the invalid. They were apparently rich people, the coach had been engaged for them solely—even the mail and express had been sent on by a separate conveyance, so that they might be more independent. It is hardly necessary to say that this fact was by no means palatable to Bill—debaring him not only the social contact and attentions of the "Express Agent," but the selection of a box-seated passenger who always "acted like a man."

"Ye kin kalkilate what kind of a pardner that 'ar yaller-livered Mayfield would make up on that box, partik'ly ez I heard before we started that he'd requested the kimpany's agent in Sacramento to

select a driver ez didn't cuss, smoke, or drink. He did, sir, by gum!"

"I reckon you were very careful, then, Bill," said Jeff.

"In course," returned Bill, with a perfectly diabolical wink. "In course! You know that 'Blue Grass,'" pointing out a spirited leader; "she's a fair horse ez horses go, but she's apt to feel her oats on a down grade, and takes a pow'ful deal o' soothin' and explanation afore she buckles down to her reg'lar work. Well, sir, I exhorted and laboured in a Christian-like way with that mare to that extent that I'm cussed if that chap didn't want to get down afore we got to the level!"

"And the ladies?" asked Jeff, whose laugh—possibly from his morning's experience—was not as ready as formerly.

"The ladies! Ef you mean that 'ar livin' skellington I packed up to yer house," said Bill promptly, "it's a pair of them in size and colour, and ready for any first-class undertaker's team in the kintry. Why, you remember that curve on Break Neck hill, where the leaders allus look as if they was alongside o' the coach and faced the other way? Well, that woman sticks her skull outer the window, and sez she, confidential-like to old yaller-belly, sez she, 'William Henry,' sez she, 'tell that man his horses are running away!'"

"You didn't get to see the—the—daughter, Bill, did you?" asked Jeff, whose laugh had become quite uneasy.

"No, I didn't," said Bill, with sudden and inexplicable vehemence, "and the less *you* see of her, Jefferson Briggs, the better for you."

Too confounded and confused by Bill's manner to question further, Jeff remained silent until they drew up at the door of the "Half-way House." But

here another surprise awaited him. Mr. Mayfield, erect and dignified, stood upon the front porch as the coach drove up.

"Driver!" began Mr. Mayfield.

There was no reply.

"Driver," said Mr. Mayfield, slightly weakening under Bill's eye, "I shall want you no longer. I have——"

"Is he speaking to me?" said Bill, audibly to Jeff, "'cause they call me 'Yuba Bill' yerabouts."

"He is," said Jeff, hastily.

"Mebbee he's drunk," said Bill audibly; "a drop or two afore breakfast sometimes upsets his kind."

"I was saying, Bill," said Mr. Mayfield, becoming utterly limp and weak again under Bill's cold grey eyes, "that I've changed my mind, and shall stop here awhile. My daughter seems already benefited by the change. You can take my traps from the boot and leave them here."

Bill laid down his lines resignedly, coolly surveyed Mr. Mayfield, the house, and the half-pleased, half-frightened Jeff, and then proceeded to remove the luggage from the boot, all the while whistling loud and offensive incredulity. Then he climbed back to his box. Mr. Mayfield, completely demoralized under this treatment, as a last resort essayed patronage.

"You can say to the Sacramento agents, Bill, that I am entirely satisfied, and——"

"Ye needn't fear but I'll give ye a good character," interrupted Bill coolly, gathering up his lines. The whip snapped, the six horses dashed forward as one, the coach plunged down the road and was gone.

With its disappearance, Mr. Mayfield stiffened slightly again. "I have just told your aunt, Mr. Briggs," he said, turning upon Jeff, "that my daughter has expressed a desire to remain here a

few days; she has slept well, seems to be invigorated by the air, and, although we expected to go on to the "Summit," Mrs. Mayfield and myself are willing to accede to her wishes. Your house seems to be new and clean. Your table—judging from the breakfast this morning—is quite satisfactory."

Jeff, in the first flush of delight at this news, forgot what that breakfast had cost him—forgot all his morning's experience, and, I fear, when he did remember it, was too full of a vague, hopeful courage to appreciate it. Conscious of showing too much pleasure, he affected the necessity of an immediate interview with his aunt, in the kitchen. But his short cut round the house was arrested by a voice and figure. It was Miss Mayfield, wrapped in a shawl and seated in a chair, basking in the sunlight of one of the bleakest and barest angles of the house. Jeff stopped in a delicious tremor.

As we are dealing with facts, however, it would be well to look at the cause of this tremor with our own eyes and not Jeff's. To be plain, my dear madam, as she basked in that remorseless, matter-of-fact California sunshine, she looked her full age—twenty-five, if a day! There were wrinkles in the corners of her dark eyes, contracted and frowning in that strong, merciless light; there was a nervous pallor in her complexion; but being one of those "fast-coloured" brunettes, whose dyes are a part of their temperament, no sickness nor wear could bleach it out. The red of her small mouth was darker than yours, I wot, and there were certain faint lines from the corners of her delicate nostrils indicating alternate repression and excitement under certain experiences, which are not found in the classic ideals. Now Jeff knew nothing of the classic ideal—did not know that a thousand years ago certain sensual idiots had, with brush and chisel, inflicted upon the

.

world the personification of the strongest and most delicate, most controlling and most subtle passion that humanity is capable of, in the likeness of a thick-waisted, idealess, expressionless, perfectly contented female animal; and that thousands of idiots had since then insisted upon perpetuating this model for the benefit of a world that had gone on sighing for, pining for, fighting for, and occasionally blowing its brains out over types far removed from that idiotic standard. Consequently Jeff saw only a face full of possibilities and probabilities, framed in a small delicate oval, saw a slight woman's form—more than usually small—and heard a low voice, to him full of gentle pride, passion, pathos, and human weakness, and was helpless.

"I only said 'good morning,'" said Miss Mayfield, with that slight, arch satisfaction in the observation of masculine bashfulness, which the best of her sex cannot forego.

"Thank you, miss; good morning. I've been wanting to say to you that I hope you wasn't mad, you know," stammered Jeff, desperately intent upon getting off his apology.

"It is *so* lovely this morning—such a change!" continued Miss Mayfield.

"Yes, miss! You know I reckoned—at least what your father said, made me kalkilate that you——"

Miss Mayfield, still smiling, knitted her brows and went on. "I slept so well last night," she said gratefully, "and feel so much better this morning, that I ventured out. I seem to be drinking in health in this clear sunlight."

"Certainly, miss. As I was sayin', your father says his daughter is in the coach; and Bill says, says he to me, 'I'll pack—I'll carry the old—I'll bring up Mrs. Mayfield, if you'll bring up the

daughter;' and when we come to the coach I saw you asleep-like in the corner, and bein' small, why, miss, you know how nat'ral it is, I——"

"Oh, Mr. Jeff! Mr. Briggs!" said Miss Mayfield, plaintively, "don't, please—don't spoil the best compliment I've had in many a year. You thought I was a child, I know, and—well, you find," she said audaciously, suddenly bringing her black eyes to bear on him like a rifle, "you find—well?"

What Jeff thought was inaudible but not invisible. Miss Mayfield saw enough of it in his eye to protest with a faint colour in her cheek. Thus does Nature betray itself to Nature the world over.

The colour faded. "It's a dreadful thing to be so weak and helpless, and to put everybody to such trouble, isn't it, Mr. Jeff? I beg your pardon—your aunt calls you Jeff."

"Please call me Jeff," said Jeff, to his own surprise rapidly gaining courage. "Everybody calls me that."

Miss Mayfield smiled. "I suppose I must do what *everybody* does. So it seems that we are to give you the trouble of keeping us here until I get better or worse?"

"Yes, miss."

"Therefore I won't detain you now. I only wanted to thank you for your gentleness last night, and to assure you that the bear skin did *not* give me my death."

She smiled and nodded her small head, and wrapped her shawl again closely around her shoulders, and turned her eyes upon the mountains, gestures which the now quick-minded Jeff interpreted as a gentle dismissal, and flew to seek his aunt.

Here he grew practical. Ready money was needed; for the "Half-way House" was such a public

monument of ill-luck, that Jeff had no credit. He must keep up the table to the level of that fortunate breakfast—to do which he had \$1.50 in the till, left by Bill, and \$2.50 produced by his Aunt Sally from her work-basket.

"Why not ask Mr. Mayfield to advance yo suthin?" said Aunt Sally.

The blood flew to Jeff's face. "Never! Don't say that again, Auntie."

The tone and manner were so unlike Jeff that the old lady sat down half frightened, and taking the corners of her apron in her hands began to whimper.

"Thar now, Auntie! I didn't mean nothin',—only if you care to have me about the place any longer, and I reckon it's little good I am any way," he added, with a new-found bitterness in his tone, "ye'll not ask me to do that."

"What's gone o' ye, Jeff?" said his aunt, lugubriously; "ye ain't nat'ral like."

Jeff laughed. "See here, Auntie; I'm goin' to take your advice. You know Rabbit?"

"The mare?"

"Yes; I'm going to sell her. The blacksmith offered me a hundred dollars for her last week."

"Ef ye'd done that a month ago, Jeff, ez I wanted ye to, instead o' keeping the brute to eat ye out o' house and home, ye'd be better off." Aunt Sally never let slip an opportunity to "improve the occasion," but preferred to exhort over the prostrate body of the "improved." "Well, I hope he mayn't change his mind."

Jeff smiled at such a suggestion regarding the best horse within fifty miles of the "Half-way House." Nevertheless he went briskly to the stable, led out and saddled a handsome grey mare, petting her the while, and keeping up a running commentary of caressing epithets to which Rabbit responded with

a whinny and playful reaches after Jeff's red flannel sleeve. Whereat Jeff, having loved the horse until it was displaced by another mistress, grew grave and suddenly threw his arms around Rabbit's neck, and then taking Rabbit's nose, thrust it in the bosom of his shirt and held it there silently for a moment. Rabbit becoming uneasy, Jeff's mood changed too, and having caparisoned himself and charger in true *vaquero* style, not without a little Mexican dandyism as to the set of his doeskin trowsers, and the tie of his red sash, put a *sombrero* rakishly on his curls and leaped into the saddle.

Jeff was a fair rider in a country where riding was understood as a natural instinct, and not as a purely artificial habit of horse and rider, consequently he was not perched up, jockey fashion, with a knee-grip for his body, and a rein-rest for his arms on the beast's mouth, but rode with long, loose stirrups, his legs clasping the barrel of his horse, his single rein lying loose upon her neck, leaving her head free as the wind. After this fashion he had often emerged from a cloud of dust on the red mountain road, striking admiration into the hearts of the wayfarers and coach-passengers, and leaving a trail of pleasant incense in the dust behind him. It was therefore with considerable confidence in himself, and a little human vanity, that he dashed round the house, and threw his mare skilfully on her haunches exactly a foot before Miss Mayfield—himself a resplendent vision of flying riata, crimson scarf, fawn-coloured trowsers, and jingling silver spurs.

"Kin I do anythin' for ye, miss, at the Forks?"

Miss Mayfield looked up quietly. "I think not," she said indifferently, as if the flaming Jeff was a very common occurrence.

Jeff here permitted the mare to bolt fifty yards, caught her up sharply, swung her round on her

off hind heel, permitted her to paw the air once or twice with her white-stockinged fore feet, and then, with another dash forward, pulled her up again just before she apparently took Miss Mayfield and her chair in a running leap.

"Are you sure, miss?" asked Jeff, with a flushed face and a rather lugubrious voice.

"Quite so, thank you," she said, coldly, looking past this centaur to the wooded mountain beyond.

Jeff, thoroughly crushed, was pacing meekly away when a childlike voice stopped him.

"If you are going near a carpenter's shop you might get a new shutter for my window; it blew away last night."

"It did, miss?"

"Yes," said the shrill voice of Aunt Sally, from the doorway, "In course it did! Ye must be crazy, Jeff, for thar it stands in No. 8, whar ye must have put it after ye picked it up outside."

Jeff, conscious that Miss Mayfield's eyes were on his suffused face, stammered "that he would attend to it," and put spurs to the mare, eager only to escape.

It was not his only discomfiture; for the blacksmith, seeing Jeff's nervousness and anxiety, was suspicious of something wrong, as the world is apt to be, and appeased his conscience after the worldly fashion, by driving a hard bargain with the doubtful brother in affliction—the morality of a horse trade residing always with the seller. Whereby Master Jeff received only eighty dollars for horse and outfit—worth at least two hundred—and was also mulcted of forty dollars, principal and interest for past service of the blacksmith. Jeff walked home with forty dollars in his pocket—capital to prosecute his honest calling of innkeeper; the blacksmith retired to an adjoining tavern to discuss Jeff's affairs, and further

reduce his credit. Yet I doubt which was the happier—the blacksmith estimating his possible gains, and doubtful of some uncertain sequence in his luck, or Jeff, temporarily relieved, boundlessly hopeful, and filled with the vague delights of a first passion. The only discontented brute in the whole transaction was poor Rabbit, who, missing certain attentions, became indignant, after the manner of her sex, bit a piece out of her crib, kicked a hole in her box, and, receiving a bad character from the blacksmith, gave a worse one to her late master.

Jeff's purchases were of a temporary and ornamental quality, but not always judicious as a permanent investment. Overhearing some remark from Miss Mayfield concerning the dangerous character of the two-tined steel fork, which was part of the table equipage of the "Half-way House," he purchased half a dozen of what his aunt was pleased to specify as "split spoons," and thereby lost his late good standing with her. He not only repaired the window-shutter, but tempered the glaring window itself with a bit of curtain; he half carpeted Miss Mayfield's bedroom with wild-cat skins and the now historical bear skin, and felt himself overpaid when that young lady, passing the soft tabby-skins across her cheek, declared they were "lovely." For Miss Mayfield, deprecating slaughter in the abstract, accepted its results gratefully, like the rest of her sex, and while willing to "let the hart ungalled play," nevertheless was able to console herself with its venison. The woods, besides yielding aid and comfort of this kind to the distressed damsel, were *flamboyant* with vivid spring blossoms, and Jeff lit up the cold, white walls of her virgin cell with demonstrative colour, and made—what his aunt, a cleanly soul, whose ideas of that quality were based upon the absence of any colour whatever—called "a litter."

The result of which was to make Miss Mayfield, otherwise languid and *ennuyé*, welcome Jeff's presence with a smile; to make Jeff, otherwise anxious, eager, and keenly attentive, mute and silent in her presence. Two symptoms bad for Jeff.

Meantime Mr. Mayfield's small conventional spirit pined for fellowship, only to be found in larger civilizations, and sought, under plea of business, a visit to Sacramento, where a few of the Mayfield type, still surviving, were to be found.

This was a relief to Jeff, who, only through his regard for the daughter, was kept from open quarrel with the father. He fancied Miss Mayfield felt relieved too, although Jeff had noticed that Mayfield had deferred to his daughter more often than to his wife—over whom your conventional small autocrat is always victorious. It takes the legal matrimonial contract to properly develop the first-class tyrant, male or female.

On one of these days Jeff was returning through the woods from marketing at the Forks, which, since the sale of Rabbit, had become a foot-sore and tedious business. He had reached the edge of the forest, and, through the wider-spaced trees, the bleak sunlit plateau of his house was beginning to open out, when he stopped instantly. I know not what Jeff had been thinking of, as he trudged along, but here, all at once, he was thrilled and possessed with the odour of some faint, foreign perfume. He flushed a little at first, and then turned pale. Now the woods were as full of as delicate, as subtle, as grateful, and, I wot, far healthier and purer odours than this; but this represented to Jeff the physical contiguity of Miss Mayfield, who had the knack—peculiar to some of her sex—of selecting a perfume that ideally identified her. Jeff looked around cautiously; at the foot of a tree hard by lay one of her wraps, still redolent of her. Jeff

put down the bag which, in lieu of a market basket, he was carrying on his shoulder, and with a blushing face hid it behind a tree. It contained her dinner!

He took a few steps forwards with an assumption of ease and unconsciousness. Then he stopped, for not a hundred yards distant sat Miss Mayfield on a mossy boulder, her cloak hanging from her shoulders, her hands clasped round her crossed knees, and one little foot out—an exasperating combination of Evangelino and little Red Riding Hood in everything, I fear, but credulousness and self-devotion. She looked up as he walked towards her (*non constat* that the little witch had not already seen him half a mile away!) and smiled sweetly as she looked at him. So sweetly, indeed, that poor Jeff felt like the hulking wolf of the old world fable, and hesitated—as that wolf did *not*. The California *faunæ* have possibly depreciated.

"Come here!" she cried, in a small head voice, not unlike a bird's twitter.

Jeff lumbered on clumsily. His high boots had become suddenly very heavy.

"I'm so glad to see you. I've just tired poor mother out—I'm always tiring people out—and she's gone back to the house to write letters. Sit down, Mr. Jeff, do, *please!*"

Jeff, feeling uncomfortably large in Miss Mayfield's presence, painfully seated himself on the edge of a very low stone, which had the effect of bringing his knees up on a level with his chin, and affected an ease glaringly simulated.

"Or lie down, *there*, Mr. Jeff—it is so comfortable."

Jeff, with a dreadful conviction that he was crashing down like a falling pine tree, managed at last to acquire a recumbent position at a respectful distance from the little figure.

"There, isn't it nice?"

"Yes, Miss Mayfield."

"But, perhaps," said Miss Mayfield, now that she had him down, "perhaps you *too* have got something to do. Dear me! I'm like that naughty boy in the story-book, who went round to all the animals, in turn, asking them to play with him. He could only find the butterfly who had nothing to do. I don't wonder he was disgusted. I hate butterflies."

Love clarifies the intellect! Jeff, astonished at himself, burst out, "Why, look yer, Miss Mayfield, the butterfly on'y hez a day or two to—to—to live and—be happy!"

Miss Mayfield crossed her knees again, and instantly, after the sublime fashion of her sex, scattered his intellects by a swift transition from the abstract to the concrete. "But *you're* not a butterfly, Mr. Jeff. You're always doing something. You've been hunting."

"No-o!" said Jeff, scarlet, as he thought of his gun in pawn at the "Summit."

"But you *do* hunt; I know it."

"How?"

"You shot those quail for me the morning after I came. I heard you go out—early—very early."

"Why, you allowed you slept so well that night, Miss Mayfield."

"Yes; but there's a kind of delicious half-sleep that sick people have sometimes, when they know and are gratefully conscious that other people are doing things for them, and it makes them rest all the sweeter."

There was a dead silence. Jeff, thrilling all over, dared not say anything to dispel his delicious dream. Miss Mayfield, alarmed at his readiness with the butterfly illustration, stopped short. They both looked at the prospect, at the distant "Summit Hotel"—a mere snow-drift on the mountain—at the clear

sunlight on the barren plateau, at the bleak, uncompromising "Half-way House," and—said nothing.

"I ought to be very grateful," at last began Miss Mayfield, in quite another voice, and a suggestion that she was now approaching real and profitable conversation, "that I'm so much better. This mountain air has been like balm to me. I feel I am growing stronger day by day. I do not wonder that you are so healthy and so strong as you are, Mr. Jeff."

Jeff, who really did not know before that he was so healthy, apologetically admitted the fact. At the same time, he was miserably conscious that Miss Mayfield's condition, despite her ill health, was very superior to his own.

"A month ago," she continued, reflectively, "my mother would never have thought it possible to leave me here alone. Perhaps she may be getting worried now."

Miss Mayfield had calculated over much on Jeff's recumbent position. To her surprise and slight mortification, he rose instantly to his feet, and said anxiously—

"Ef you think so, miss, p'raps I'm keeping you here."

"Not at all, Mr. Jeff. Your being here is a sufficient excuse for my staying," she replied, with the large dignity of a small body.

Jeff, mentally and physically crushed again, came down a little heavier than before, and reclined humbly at her feet. Second knock-down blow for Miss Mayfield.

"Come, Mr. Jeff," said the triumphant goddess, in her first voice, "tell me something about yourself. How do you live here—I mean, what do you do? You ride, of course—and very well too, I can tell you! But you know *that*. And of course that scarf and

the silver spurs and the whole dashing equipage are not intended entirely for yourself. No! Some young woman is made happy by that exhibition, of course. Well, then there's the riding down to see her, and perhaps the riding out *with* her, and—what else?"

"Miss Mayfield," said Jeff, suddenly rising above his elbow and his grammar, "thar isn't *no* young woman! Thar isn't another soul except yourself that I've laid eyes on, or cared to see since I've been yer. Ef my aunt hez been telling ye that—she's—she—she—she—she—lies."

Absolute, undiluted truth, even of a complimentary nature, is confounding to most women. Miss Mayfield was no exception to her sex. She first laughed, as she felt she ought to, and properly might with any other man than Jeff; then she got frightened, and said hurriedly, "No, no! you misunderstand mo. Your aunt has said nothing." And then she stopped with a pink spot on her cheek-bones. First blood for Jeff!

Now this would never do; it was worse than the butterflies! She rose to her full height—four feet eleven and a half—and drew her cloak over her shoulders. "I think I will return to the house," she said, quietly; "I suppose I ought not to overtask my strength."

"You'd better let me go with you, miss," said Jeff, submissively.

"I will, on one condition," she said, recovering her archness, with a little venom in it, I fear. "You were going home, too, when I called to you. Now, I do not intend to let you leave that bag behind that tree, and then have to come back for it, just because you feel obliged to go with me. Bring it with you on one arm, and I'll take the other, or else—I'll go alone. Don't be alarmed," she added, softly; "I'm

stronger than I was the first night I came, when you carried me and all my worldly goods besides."

She turned upon him her subtle magnetic eyes, and looked at him as she had the first night they met. Jeff turned away bewildered, but presently appeared again with the bag on his shoulder, and her wrap on his arm. As she slipped her little hand over his sleeve, he began, apologetically and nervously—

"When I said that about Aunt Sally, miss, I——"

The hand immediately became limp, the grasp conventional.

"I was mad, miss," Jeff blundered on, "and I don't see how *you* believed it—knowing everything ez you do."

"How knowing everything[?] as I do?" asked Miss Mayfield, coldly.

"Why, about the quail, and about the bag!"

"Oh," said Miss Mayfield.

Five minutes later, Yuba Bill nearly ditched his coach in his utter amazement at an apparently simple spectacle—a tall, good-looking young fellow, in a red shirt and high boots, carrying a bag on his back, and beside him, hanging confidentially on his arm, a small, slight, pretty girl in a red cloak. "Nothing *mean* about *her*, eh, Bill?" said an admiring box-passenger. "Young couple, I reckon, just out from the States."

"No!" roared Bill.

"Oh, well, his sweetheart, I reckon?" suggested the box-passenger.

"Nary time!" growled Bill. "Look yer! I know 'em both, and they knows *me*. Did ye notiss she never drops his arm when she sees the stage comin', but kinder trapes along jist the same? Had they been courtin', she'd hev dropped his arm like pizen, and walked on t'other side the road."

Nevertheless, for some occult reason, Bill was evidently out of humour; and for the next few miles exhorted the impenitent Blue Grass horse with considerable fervour.

Meanwhile this pair, outwardly the picture of pastoral conjugality, slowly descended the hill. In that brief time, failing to get at any further facts regarding Jeff's life, or perhaps reading the story quite plainly, Miss Mayfield had twittered prettily about herself. She painted her tropic life in the Sandwich Islands—her delicious "laziness," as she called it; "for, you know," she added, "although I had the excuse of being an invalid, and of living in the laziest climate in the world, and of having money, I think, Mr. Jeff, that I'm naturally lazy. Perhaps if I lived here long enough, and got well again, I might do something, but I don't think I could ever be like your aunt. And there she is now, Mr. Jeff, making signs for you to hasten. No, don't mind me, but run on ahead; else I shall have *her* blaming me for demoralizing *you* too. Go; I insist upon it! I can walk the rest of the way alone. Will you go? You won't? Then I shall stop here and not stir another step forward until you do."

She stopped, half jestingly, half earnestly, in the middle of the road, and emphasized her determination with a nod of her head—an action that, however, shook her hat first rakishly over one eye, and then on the ground. At which Jeff laughed, picked it up, presented it to her, and then ran off to the house.

CHAPTER III.

His aunt met him angrily on the porch. "Thar ye are at last, and yer's a stranger waitin' to see you. He's been axin all sorts o' questions about the house

and the business, and kinder snoopin' round permiskiss. I don't like his looks, Jeff, but thet's no reason why *ye* should be gallivantin' round in business hours."

A large, thick-set man, with a mechanical smile that was an overt act of false pretence, was lounging in the bar-room. Jeff dimly remembered to have seen him at the last county election, distributing tickets at the polls. This gavē Jeff a slight prejudice against him, but a greater presentiment of some vague evil in the air caused him to motion the stranger to an empty room in the angle of the house behind the bar-room, which was too near the hall through which Miss Mayfield must presently pass.

It was an infelicitous act of precaution, for at that very moment Miss Mayfield slowly passed beneath its open window, and seeing her chair in the sunny angle, dropped into it for rest and possibly meditation. Consequently she overheard every word of the following colloquy.

The Stranger's voice: "Well, now, seein' ez I've been waitin' for *ye* over an hour, off and on, and ez my bizness with *ye* is two words, it strikes me *yer* puttin' on a little too much style in this *yer* interview, Mr. Jefferson Briggs."

Jeff's voice (a little husky with restraint): "What is *yer* business?"

The Stranger's voice (lazily): "It's an at-tachment on this *yer* property for principal, interest, and costs—one hundred and twelve dollars and seventy-five cents, at the suit of Cyrus Parker."

Jeff's voice (in quick surprise): "Parker? Why, I saw him only yesterday, and he agreed to wait a spell longer."

The Stranger's voice: "Mebbee he did! Mebbee he heard afterwards suthin' about the goin's on up

yar. Mebbe he heard suthin' o' property bein' converted into ready cash—sich property ez horses, guns, and sich! Mebbe he heard o' gay and festivo doin's—chickin every day, fresh eggs, butcher's meat, port wine, and sich! Mebbe he allowed that his chances o' gettin' his own honest grub outer his debt was lookin' mighty slim! Mebbe" (louder) "he thought he'd ask the man who bought yer horse, and the man you pawned your gun to, what was goin' on! Mebbe he thought he'd like to get a holt a suthin' himself, even if it was only some of that yar chickin and port wine!"

Jeff's voice (earnestly and hastily): "They're not for me. I have a family boarding here, with a sick daughter. You don't think——"

The Stranger's voice (lazily): "I reckon! I seed you and her pre-ambulating down the hill, lockin' arms. A good deal o' style, Jeff—fancy! expensive! How does Aunt Sally take it?"

A slight shaking of the floor and window—a dead silence.

The Stranger's voice (very faintly): "For God's sake, let me up!"

Jeff's voice (very distinctly): "Another word! raise your voice above a whisper, and by the living G——"

Silence.

The Stranger's voice (gasping): "I—I—promise!"

Jeff's voice (low and desperate): "Get up out of that! Sit down thar! Now hear me! I'm not resisting your process. If you had all h—ll as witnesses you daren't say *that*. I've shut up your foul jaw, and kept it from poisoning the air, and thar's no law in Californy agin it! Now listen. What! You will, will you?"

Everything quiet; a bird twittering on the window ledge, nothing more.

The Stranger's voice (very husky): "I cavel Gimme some whisky."

Jeff's voice: "When we're through. Now listen! You can take possession of the house; you can stand behind the bar and take every cent that comes in; you can prevent anything going out; but ez long as Mr. Mayfield and his family stay here, by the living God—law or no law—I'll be boss hero, and they shall never know it!"

The Stranger's voice (weakly and submissively): "That sounds square. Anythin' not agin the law and in reason, Jeff!"

Jeff's voice: "I mean to be square. Here is all the money I have, ten dollars. Take it for any extra trouble you may have to satisfy me."

A pause—the clinking of coin.

The Stranger's voice (deprecatingly): "Well! I reckon that *would* be about fair. Consider the *trouble*" (a weak laugh here) "*just now*. 'Tain't every man ez hez your grip. He! he! Ef ye hadn't took me so suddent like—he! he!—well!—how about that ar whisky?"

Jeff's voice (coolly): "I'll bring it."

Steps, silence, coughing, spitting, and throat-clearing from the stranger.

Steps again and the click of glass.

The Stranger's voice (submissively): "In course I must go back to the Forks and fetch up my duds. Ye know what I mean! Thar nòw—don't, Mr. Jeff!"

Jeff's voice (sternly): "If I find you go back on me——"

The Stranger's voice (hurriedly): "Thar's my hand on it. Ye can count on Jim Dodd."

Steps again. Silence. A bird lights on the window ledge, and peers into the room. All is at rest.

* * * * *

Jeff and the deputy-sheriff walked through the bar-room and out on the porch. Miss Mayfield in an arm-chair looked up from her book.

"I've written a letter to my father that I'd like to have mailed at the Forks this afternoon," she said, looking from Jeff to the stranger; "perhaps this gentleman will oblige me by taking it, if he's going that way."

"I'll take it, miss," said Jeff, hurriedly.

"No," said Miss Mayfield, archly, "I've taken up too much of your time already."

"I'm at your service, miss," said the stranger, considerably affected by the spectacle of this pretty girl, who certainly at that moment, in her bright eyes and slightly pink cheeks, belied the suggestion of ill health.

"Thank you. Dear me!" She was rummaging in a reticule and in her pockets. "Oh, Mr. Jeff!"

"Yes, miss?"

"I'm so frightened!"

"How, miss?"

"I have—yes!—I have left that letter on the stump in the woods, where I was sitting when you came. Would you——"

Jeff darted into the house, seized his hat, and stopped. He was thinking of the stranger.

"Could you be so kind?"

Jeff looked in her agitated face, cast a meaning glance at the stranger, and was off like a shot.

The fire dropped out of Miss Mayfield's eyes and cheeks. She turned towards the stranger.

"Please step this way."

She always hated her own childish treble. But just at that moment she thought she had put force and dignity into it, and was correspondingly satisfied. The deputy-sheriff was equally pleased, and came towards the upright little figure with open admiration.

"Your name is Dodd—James Dodd."

"Yes, miss."

"You are the deputy-sheriff of the county! Don't look round—there is no one here!"

"Well, miss—if you say so—yes!"

"My father—Mr. Mayfield—understood so. I regret he is not here. I regret still more I could not have seen you before you saw Mr. Briggs, as he wished me to."

"Yes, miss."

"My father is a friend of Mr. Briggs, and knows something of his affairs. There was a debt to a Mr. Parker" (here Miss Mayfield apparently consulted an entry in her tablets) "of one hundred and twelve dollars and seventy-five cents—am I right?"

The deputy, with great respect, "That is the figgers."

"Which he wished to pay without the knowledge of Mr. Briggs, who would not have consented to it."

The official opened his eyes. "Yes, miss."

"Well, as Mr. Mayfield is *not* here, I am here to pay it for him. You can take a cheque on Wells, Fargo & Co., I suppose?"

"Certainly, miss."

She took a cheque-book and pen and ink from her reticule, and filled up a cheque. She handed it to him, and the pen and ink. "You are to give me a receipt."

The deputy looked at the matter-of-fact little figure, and signed and handed over the receipted bill.

"My father said Mr. Briggs was not to know this."

"Certainly not, miss."

"It was Mr. Briggs' intention to let the judgment take its course, and give up the house. You are a man of business, Mr. Dodd, and know that this is ridiculous!"

The deputy laughed. "In course, miss."

"And whatever Mr. Briggs may have proposed to you to do, when you go back to the Forks, you are to write him a letter, and say that you will simply hold the judgment without levy."

"All right, miss," said the deputy, not ill-pleased to hold himself in this superior attitude to Jeff.

"And——"

"Yes, miss?"

She looked steadily at him. "Mr. Briggs told my father that he would pay you ten dollars for the privilege of staying here."

"Yes, miss."

"And of course *that's* not necessary now."

"No-o, miss."

A very small white hand—a mere child's hand—was here extended, palm uppermost.

The official, demoralized completely, looked at it a moment, then went into his pockets and counted out into the palm the coins given by Jeff; they completely filled the tiny receptacle.

Miss Mayfield counted the money gravely, and placed it in her *porte-monnaie* with a snap.

Certain qualities affect certain natures. This practical business act of the diminutive beauty before him—albeit he was just ten dollars out of pocket by it—struck the official into helpless admiration. He hesitated.

"That's all," said Miss Mayfield, coolly; "you need not wait. The letter was only an excuse to get Mr. Briggs out of the way."

"I understand ye, miss." He hesitated still. "Do you reckon to stop in these parts long?"

"I don't know."

"'Cause ye ought to come down some day to the Forks."

"Yes."

"Good morning, miss."

"Good morning."

Yet at the corner of the house the rascal turned and looked back at the little figure in the sunlight. He had just been physically overcome by a younger man—he had lost ten dollars—he had a wife and three children. He forgot all this. He had been captivated by Miss Mayfield!

That practical heroine sat there five minutes. At the end of that time Jeff came bounding down the hill, his curls damp with perspiration; his fresh, honest face the picture of woe, *her* woe, for the letter could not be found!

"Never mind, Mr. Jeff. I wrote another and gave it to him."

Two tears were standing on her cheeks. Jeff turned white.

"Good God, miss!"

"It's nothing. You were right, Mr. Jeff! I ought not to have walked down here alone. I'm very, very tired, and—so—so miserable."

What woman could withstand the anguish of that honest boyish face? I fear Miss Mayfield could, for she looked at him over her handkerchief, and said, "Perhaps you had something to say to your friend, and I've sent him off."

"Nothing," said Jeff, hurriedly; and she saw that all his other troubles had vanished at the sight of her weakness. She rose tremblingly from her seat. "I think I will go in now, but I think—I think—I must ask you to—to—carry me!"

Oh, lame and impotent conclusion!

The next moment Jeff, pale, strong, passionate, but tender as a mother, lifted her in his arms and brought her into the sitting-room. A simultaneous ejaculation broke from Aunt Sally and Mrs. Mayfield—the possible comment of posterity on the whole episode.

"Well, Jeff, I reckoned you'd be up to suthin' like that!"

"Well, Jessie! I knew you couldn't be trusted."

Mr. James Dodd did not return from the Forks that afternoon, to Jeff's vague uneasiness. Towards evening a messenger brought a note from him, written on the back of a printed legal form, to this effect:—

"DEAR SIR,

"Seeing as you Intend to act on the Square in regard to that little Mater I have aranged Things so that I ant got to stop with you but I'll drop in onct in a wile to keep up a show for a Drink.

"respy yours

"J. DODD."

In this latter suggestion our legal Cerberus exhibited all three of his heads at once. One could keep faith with Miss Mayfield, one could see her "onct in a wile," and one could drink at Jeff's expense. Innocent Jeff saw only generosity and kindness in the man he had half choked, and a sense of remorse and shame almost outweighed the relief of his absence. "He might hev been ugly," said Jeff. He did not know how, in this selfish world, there is very little room for gratuitous, active ugliness.

Miss Mayfield did not leave her room that afternoon. The wind was getting up, and it was growing dark when Jeff, idly sitting on his porch, hoping for her appearance, was quite astounded at the apparition of Yuba Bill as a pedestrian, dusty and thirsty, making for his usual refreshment. Jeff brought out the bottle, but could not refrain from mixing his verbal astonishment with the conventional cocktail.

Bill, partaking of his liquor and becoming once more a speaking animal, slowly drew off his heavy, baggy driving-gloves. No one had ever seen Bill without them—he was currently believed to sleep in them—and when he laid them on the counter they still retained the grip of his hand, which gave them an entertaining likeness to two plethoric and over-fed spiders.

"Ef I concluded to pass over my lines to a friend and take a *pasear* up yer this evening," said Bill, eyeing Jeff sharply, "I don't know ez thar's any law agin it! Unless yer keepin' a private branch o' the Occidental Ho-tel, and on'y take in fash'n'ble fam-merlies!"

Jeff, with a rising colour, protested against such a supposition.

"Because ef ye *are*," said Bill, lifting his voice, and crushing one of the overgrown spiders with his fist, "I've got a word or two to say to the son of Joe Briggs of Tuolumno. Yes, sir! Joe Briggs—yer father—ez blew his brains out for want of a man ez could stand up and say a word to him at the right time."

"Bill," said Jeff, in a low, resolute tone—that tone yielded up only from the smitten chords of despair and desperation—"thar's a sick woman in the house. I'll listen to anything you've got to say if you'll say it quietly. But you must and *shall* speak low."

Real men quickly recognize real men the world over; it is only your shams who fence and spar. Bill, taking in the voice of the speaker more than his words, dropped his own.

"I said I had a kepple of words to say to ye. Thar isn't any time in the last fower months—ever since ye took stock in this old shanty, for the matter o' that—that I couldn't hev said them to ye. I've

knowed all your doin's. I've knowed all your debts, 'specially that ye owe that sneakin' hound Parker; and thar isn't a time that I couldn't and wouldn't hev chipped in and paid 'em for ye—for your father's sake—ef I'd allowed it to be the square thing for ye. But I know ye, Jeff. I know what's in your *blood*. I knew your father—allus dreamin', hopin', waitin'; I know *you*, Jeff, dreamin', hopin', waitin' till the end. And I stood by, givin' you a free rein, and let it come!"

Jeff buried his face in his hands.

"It ain't your blame—it's blood! It ain't a week ago ez the kimpany passes me over a loss. 'Three quarters Morgan,' sez they. Sez I, 'Wot's the other quarter?' Sez they, 'A Mexican half-breed.' Well, she was a fair sort of loss. Comin' down Heavy-tree Hill last trip, we meets a drove o' Spanish steers. In course she goes wild directly. Blood!"

Bill raised his glass, softly swirled its contents round and round, tasted it, and set it down.

"The kepple o' words I had to say to ye was this: Git up and git!"

Something like this had passed through Jeff's mind the day before the Mayfields came. Something like it had haunted him once or twice since. He turned quickly upon the speaker.

"Ez how? you sez," said Bill, catching at the look. "I drives up yer some night, and you sez to me, 'Bill, hev you got two seats over to the Divide for me and Auntie—out on a *pasear*.' And I sez, 'I happen to hev one inside and one on the box with me.' And you hands out yer traps and any vallybles ye don't want ter leave, and you puts your aunt inside, and gets up on the box with me. And you sez to me, ez man to man, 'Bill,' sez you, 'might you hev a kepple o' hundred dollars about yo that ye could lend a man ez was leaving the county, dead

broke?' and I sez, 'I've got it, and I know of an op'nin' for such a man in the next county.' And you steps into *that* op'nin', and your creditors—'spesh'ly Parker—slips into *this*, and in a week they offers to settle with ye ten cents on the dollar."

Jeff started, flushed, trembled, recovered himself, and after a moment said, doggedly, "I can't do it, Bill; I couldn't."

"In course," said Bill, putting his hands slowly into his pockets, and stretching his legs out—"in course ye can't, because of a woman!"

Jeff turned upon him like a hunted bear. Both men rose, but Bill already had his hand on Jeff's shoulder.

"I reckoned a minute ago there was a sick gal in the house! Who's going to make a row now! Who's going to stamp and tear round, eh?"

Jeff sank back on his chair.

"I said thar was a woman," continued Bill; "thar allus is one! Let a man be hell-bent or heaven-bent, somewhere in his tracks is a woman's feet. I don't say anythin' agin this gal, ez a gal. The best on 'em, Jeff, is only guide-posts to p'int a fellow on his right road, and only a fool or a drunken man holds on to 'em or leans agin 'em. Allowin' this gal is all you think she is, how far is your guide-post goin' with ye, eh? Is she goin' to leave her father and mother for ye? Is she goin' to give up herself and her easy ways and her sicknesses for ye? Is she willin' to take ye for a perpetooal landlord the rest of her life? And if she is, Jeff, are ye the man to let her? Are ye willin' to run on her errands, to fetch her dinners ez ye do? Thar ez men ez does it; not yer in Californy, but over in the States thar's fellows is willin' to take that situation. I've heard," continued Bill, in a low, mysterious voice, as of one describing the habits of the Anthropophagi—"I've heard o'

fellows ez call themselves men, sellin' of themselves 'to rich women in that way. I've heard o' rich gals buyin' of men for their shape; sometimes—but thet's in furrin' kintries—for their pedigree! I've heard o' fellows bein' in that business, and callin' themselves men instead o' hosses! Ye ain't that kind o' man, Jeff. 'Tain't in yer blood. Yer father was a fool about women, and in course they ruined him, ez they allus do the best men. It's on'y the fools and sneaks ez a woman ever makes anythin' out of. When ye hear of a man a woman hez made, ye hears of a nincompoop! And when they does produce 'em in the way o' nater, they ain't responsible for 'em, and sez they're the image o' their fathers! Ye ain't a man ez is goin' to trust yer fate to a woman!"

"No," said Jeff, darkly.

"I reckoned not," said Bill, putting his hands in his pockets again. "Ye might if ye was one o' them kind o' fellows as kem up from 'Frisco with her to Sacramento. One o' them kind o' fellows ez could sling poetry and French and Latin to her—one of *her* kind—but ye ain't! No, sir!"

Unwise William of Yuba! In any other breast but Jeff's, that random shot would have awakened the irregular auxiliary of love—jealousy! But Jeff, being at once proud and humble, had neither varity nor conceit, without which jealousy is impossible. Yet he winced a little, for he had feeling, and then said, earnestly—

"Do you think that opening you spoke of would hold for a day or two longer?"

"I reckon."

"Well then, I think I can settle up matters here, my own way, and go with you, Bill."

He had risen and yet hesitatingly kept his hand on the back of his chair. "Bill!"

"Jeff!"

"I want to ask you a question; speak up, and don't mind me, but say the truth."

Our crafty Ulysses, believing that he was about to be entrapped, ensconced himself in his pockets, cocked one eye, and said, "Go on, Jeff."

"Was my father *very* bad?"

Bill took his hands from his pockets. "Thar isn't a man ez crawls above his grave ez is worthy to lie in the same ground with him!"

"Thank you, Bill. Good night; I'm going to turn in!"

"Look yar, boy! G—d d—n it all, Jeff! what do ye mean?"

There were two tears—twin sisters of those in his sweetheart's eyes that afternoon—now standing in Jeff's!

Bill caught both his hands in his own. Had they been of the Latin race they would have, right honestly, taken each other in their arms, and perhaps kissed! Being Anglo-Saxons, they gripped each other's hands hard, and one, as above stated, swore!

When Jeff ascended to his room that night, he went directly to his trunk and took out Miss Mayfield's slipper. Alack! during the day Aunt Sally had "put things to rights" in his room, and the trunk had been moved. This had somewhat disordered its contents, and Miss Mayfield's slipper contained a dozen shot from a broken Eley's cartridge, a few quinine pills, four postage stamps, part of a coral earring which Jeff—on the most apocryphal authority—fondly believed belonged to his mother, whom he had never seen, and a small silver school medal which Jeff had once received for "good conduct," much to his own surprise, but which he still religiously kept as evidence of former conventional character. He coloured a little, rubbed the

medal and earring ruefully on his sleeve, replaced them in his trunk, and then hastily emptied the rest of the slipper's contents on the floor. This done, he drew off his boots, and, gliding noiselessly down the stairs, hung the slipper on the knob of Miss Mayfield's door, and glided back again without detection.

Rolling himself in his blankets, he lay down on his bed. But not to sleep! Staringly wide awake, he at last felt the lulling of the wind that nightly shook his casement, and listened while the great, rambling, creaking, disjointed "Half-way House" slowly settled itself to repose. He thought of many things; of himself, of his past, of his future, but chiefly, I fear, of the pale proud face now sleeping contentedly in the chamber below him. He tossed with many plans, and projects, more or less impracticable, and then began to doze. Whereat the moon, creeping in the window, laid a cold white arm across him, and eventually dried a few foolish tears upon his sleeping lashes.

CHAPTER IV.

AUNT SALLY was making pies in the kitchen the next morning when Jeff hesitatingly stole upon her. The moment was not a felicitous one. Pie-making was usually an aggressive pursuit with Aunt Sally, entered into severely, and prosecuted unto the bitter end. After watching her a few moments Jeff came up and placed his arms tenderly around her. People very much in love find relief, I am told, in this vicarious expression.

"Aunty."

"Well, Jeff! Thar, now—yer gittin' all dough!" Nevertheless, the hard face relaxed a little. Something of a smile stole round her mouth, showing

what she might have been before theology and bitters had supplied the natural feminine longings.

"Aunt dear."

"You —— boy!"

It *was* a boy's face—albeit bearded like the pard, with an extra fierceness in the mustachios—that looked upon hers. She could not help bestowing a grim floury kiss upon it.

"Well, what is it now?"

"I'm thinking, Aunt, it's high time you and me packed up our traps and 'shook' this yar shanty, and located somewhere else." Jeff's voice was ostentatiously cheerful, but his eyes were a little anxious.

"What for *now*?"

Jeff hastily recounted his ill-luck, and the various reasons—excepting of course the dominant one—for his resolution.

"And when do you kalkilate to go?"

"If you'll look arter things here," hesitated Jeff, "I reckon I'd go up along with Bill to-morrow, and look round a bit."

"And how long do you reckon that gal would stay here after yar gone?"

This was a new and startling idea to Jeff. But in his humility he saw nothing in it to flatter his conceit. Rather the reverse. He coloured, and then said, apologetically—

"I thought that you and Jinny could get along without me. The butcher will pack the provisions over from the Fork."

Laying down her rolling-pin, Aunt Sally turned upon Jeff with ostentatious deliberation. "Ye ain't," she began slowly, "ez taking a man with wimmin ez your father was—that's a fact, Jeff Briggs! They used to say that no woman as he went for could get away from him. But ye don't mean to say yer think yer not good enough—such as ye are—for this

snip of an old maid, ez big as a gold dollar, and as yaller?"

"Aunty," said Jeff, dropping his boyish manner, and his colour as suddenly, "I'd rather ye wouldn't talk that way of Miss Mayfield. Ye don't know her; and there's times," he added, with a sigh, "ez I reckon ye don't quite know *me* either. That young lady, bein' sick, likes to be looked after. Any one can do that for her. She don't mind who it is. She don't care for me except for that, and," added Jeff, humbly, "it's quite natural."

"I didn't say she did," returned Aunt Sally, viciously; "but seeing ez you've got an empty house yer on yer hands, and me a-slavin' here on jist nothin', if this gal, for the sake o' gallivantin' with ye for a spell, chooses to stay here and keep her family here, and pay high for it, I don't see why it ain't yer duty to Providence and me to take advantage of it."

Jeff raised his eyes to his aunt's face. For the first time it struck him that she might be his father's sister and yet have no blood in her veins that answered to his. There are few shocks more startling and overpowering to original natures than this sudden sense of loneliness. Jeff could not speak, but remained looking fiercely at her.

Aunt Sally misinterpreted his silence, and returned to her work on the pics. "The gal ain't no fool," she continued, rolling out the crust as if she were laying down broad propositions. "*She* reckons on it too, ez if it was charged in the bill with the board and lodging. Why, didn't she say to me, last night, that she kalkilated afore she went away to bring up some friends from 'Frisco for a few days' visit? and didn't she say, in that pipin', affected v'ice o' hers, 'I oughter make some return for yer kindness and yer nephew's kindness, Aunt Sally, by

showing people that can help you, and keep your house full, how pleasant it is up here.' She ain't no fool, with all her faintin's and dyin's away! No, Jeff Briggs. And if she wants to show ye off agin them city fellows ez she knows, and ye ain't got spunk enough to stand up and show off with her—why——" She turned her head impatiently, but he was gone.

If Jeff had ever wavered in his resolution he would have been steady enough *now*. But he had never wavered; the convictions and resolutions of suddenly awakened character are seldom moved by expediency. He was eager to taste the bitter dregs of his cup at once. He began to pack his trunk, and made his preparations for departure. Without avoiding Miss Mayfield in this new excitement, he no longer felt the need of her presence. He had satisfied his feverish anxieties by placing his trunk in the hall beside his open door, and was sitting on his bed, wrestling with a faded and overtaken carpet-bag that would not close and accept his hard conditions, when a small voice from the staircase thrilled him. He walked to the corridor, and, looking down, beheld Miss Mayfield midway on the steps of the staircase.

She had never looked so beautiful before! Jeff had only seen her in those soft enwrappings and half *deshabille* that belong to invalid femininity. Always refined and modest thus, in her present walking costume there was added a slight touch of coquettish adornment. There was a brightness of colour in her cheek and eye, partly the result of climbing the staircase, partly the result of that audacious impulse that had led her—a modest virgin—to seek a gentleman in this personal fashion. Modesty in a young girl has a comfortable satisfying charm, recognized easily by all humanity; but he must be a sorry

knave or a worse prig who is not deliciously thrilled when Modesty puts her charming little foot just over the threshold of Propriety.

"The mountain would not come to Mohammed, so Mohammed must come to the mountain," said Miss Mayfield. "Mother is asleep, Aunt Sally is at work in the kitchen, and here am I, already dressed for a ramble in this bright afternoon sunshine, and no one to go with me. But, perhaps, you too are busy?"

"No, miss. I will be with you in a moment."

I wish I could say that he went back to calm his pulses, which the dangerous music of Miss Mayfield's voice had set to throbbing, by a few moments' calm and dispassionate reflection. But he only returned to brush his curls out of his eyes and ears, and to button over his blue flannel shirt a white linen collar, which he thought might better harmonize with Miss Mayfield's attire.

She was sitting on the staircase, poking her parasol through the balusters. "You need not have taken that trouble, Mr. Jeff," she said, pleasantly. "*You* are a part of this mountain picture at all times; but *I* am obliged to think of dress."

"It was no trouble, miss."

Something in the tone of his voice made her look in his face as she rose. It was a trifle paler, and a little older. The result, doubtless, thought Miss Mayfield, of his yesterday's experience with the deputy-sheriff. Such was her rapid deduction. Nevertheless, after the fashion of her sex, she immediately began to argue from quite another hypothesis.

"You are angry with me, Mr. Jeff."

"What, I—Miss Mayfield?"

"Yes, you!"

"Miss Mayfield!"

"Oh yes, you are. Don't deny it!"

"Upon my soul——"

"Yes! You give me punishments and—penances!"

Jeff opened his blue eyes on his tormentor. Could Aunt Sally have been saying anything?

"If anybody, Miss Mayfield——" he began.

"Nobody but you. Look here!"

She extended her little hand with a smile. In the centre of her palm lay four shining double B *shot*.

"There! I found those in my slipper this morning!"

Jeff was speechless.

"Of course *you* did it! Of course it was *you* who found my slipper!" said Miss Mayfield, laughing. "But why did you put *shot* in it, Mr. Jeff? In some Catholic countries, when people have done wrong, the priests make them do penance by walking with peas in their shoes! What have I ever done to you? And why *shot*? They're ever so much harder than peas."

Seeing only the mischievous laughing face before him, and the open palm containing the damning evidence of the broken Eley's cartridge, Jeff stammered out the truth.

"I found the slipper in the bearskin, Miss Mayfield. I put it in my trunk to keep, thinking yer wouldn't miss it, and it's being a kind of remembrance after you're gone away—of—of the night you came here. Somebody moved the trunk in my room," and he hung his head here. "The things inside all got mixed up."

"And that made you change your mind about keeping it?" said Miss Mayfield, still smiling.

"No, miss."

"What was it, then?"

"I gave it back to you, Miss Mayfield, because I was going away."

"Indeed! Where?"

"I'm going to find another location. Maybe you've noticed," he continued, falling back into his old apologetic manner in spite of his pride of resolution—"maybe you've noticed that this place here has no advantages for a hotel."

"I had not, indeed. I have been very comfortable."

"Thank you, miss."

"When do you go?"

"To-night."

For all his pride and fixed purpose he could not help looking eagerly in her face. Miss Mayfield's eyes met his pleasantly and quietly.

"I'm sorry to part with you so soon," she said, as she stepped back a pace or two with folded hands. "Of course every moment of your time now is occupied. You must not think of wasting it on me."

But Jeff had recovered his sad composure. "I'd like to go with you, Miss Mayfield. It's the last time, you know," he added simply.

Miss Mayfield did not reply. It was a tacit assent, however, although she moved somewhat stiffly at his side as they walked towards the door. Quite convinced that Jeff's resolution came from his pecuniary troubles, Miss Mayfield was wondering if she had not better assure him of his security from further annoyance from Dodd. Wonderful complexity of female intellect! she was a little hurt at his ingratitude to her for a kindness he could not possibly have known. Miss Mayfield felt that in some way she was unjustly treated. How many of our miserable sex, incapable of divination, have been crushed under that unreasonable feminine reproof—"You ought to have known!"

The afternoon sun was indeed shining brightly as they stepped out before the bleak angle of the "Half-way House;" but it failed to mitigate the habitually practical austerity of the mountain breeze—a fact which Miss Mayfield had never before noticed. The house was certainly bleak and exposed; the site by no means a poetical one. She wondered if she had not put a romance into it, and perhaps even into the man beside her, which did not belong to either. It was a moment of dangerous doubt.

"I don't know but that you're right, Mr. Jeff," she said, finally, as they faced the hill, and began the ascent together. "This place is a little queer, and bleak, and—unattractive."

"Yes, miss," said Jeff, with direct simplicity, "I've always wondered what you saw in it to make you content to stay, when it would be so much prettier, and more suitable for you, at the 'Summit.'"

Miss Mayfield bit her lip, and was silent. After a few moments' climbing she said, almost pettishly, "Where is this famous 'Summit'?"

Jeff stopped. They had reached the top of the hill. He pointed across an olive-green chasm to a higher level, where, basking in the declining sun, clustered the long rambling outbuildings around the white blinking façade of the "Summit House." Framed in pines and hemlocks, tender with soft grey shadows, and nestling beyond a foreground of cultivated slope, it was a charming rustic picture.

Miss Mayfield's quick eye took in its details. Her quick intellect took in something else. She had seated herself on the road-bank, and clasping her knees between her locked fingers, she suddenly looked up at Jeff. "What possessed you to come half-way up a mountain, instead of going on to the top?"

"Poverty, miss!"

Miss Mayfield flushed a little at this practical direct answer to her half-figurative question. However, she began to think that moral Alpine-climbing youth might have pecuniary restrictions in their high ambitions, and that the hero of "Excelsior" might have succumbed to more powerful opposition than the wisdom of Age or the blandishments of Beauty.

"You mean that property up there is more expensive?"

"Yes, miss."

"But you would like to live there?"

"Yes."

They were both silent. Miss Mayfield glanced at Jeff under the corners of her lashes. He was leaning against a tree, absorbed in thought. Accustomed to look upon him as a pleasing picturesque object, quite fresh, original, and characteristic, she was somewhat disturbed to find that to-day he presented certain other qualities which clearly did not agree with her preconceived ideas of his condition. He had abandoned his usual large top-boots for low shoes, and she could not help noticing that his feet were small and slender, as were his hands, albeit browned by exposure. His ruddy colour was gone too, and his face, pale with sorrow and experience, had a new expression. His buttoned-up coat and white collar, so unlike his usual self, also had its suggestions—which Miss Mayfield was at first inclined to resent. Women are quick to notice and augur more or less wisely from these small details. Nevertheless, she began in quite another tone.

"Do you remember your mother—*Mr.—Mr.—Briggs?*"

Jeff noticed the new epithet. "No, miss; she died when I was quite young."

"Your father, then?"

Jeff's eye kindled a little, aggressively. "I remember *him*."

"What was he?"

"Miss Mayfield!"

"What was his business or profession?"

"He—hadn't—any!"

"Oh, I see—a gentleman of property."

Jeff hesitated, looked at Miss Mayfield hurriedly, coloured, and did not reply.

"And lost his property, Mr. Briggs?"

With one of those rare impulses of an overtaken gentle nature, Jeff turned upon her almost savagely. "My father was a gambler, and shot himself at a gambling table."

Miss Mayfield rose hurriedly. "I—I—beg your pardon, Mr. Jeff."

Jeff was silent.

"You know—you *must* know—that I did not mean——"

No reply.

"Mr. Jeff!"

Her little hand fluttered towards him, and lit upon his sleeve, where it was suddenly captured and pressed passionately to his lips.

"I did not mean to be thoughtless or unkind," said Miss Mayfield, discreetly keeping to the point, and trying weakly to disengage her hand. "You know I wouldn't hurt your feelings."

"I know, Miss Mayfield." (Another kiss.)

"I was ignorant of your history."

"Yes, miss." (A kiss.)

"And if I could do anything for you, Mr. Jeff——" She stopped.

It was a very trying position. Being small, she was drawn after her hand quite up to Jeff's shoulder, while he, assenting in monosyllables, was parting

the fingers, and kissing them separately. Reasonable discourse in this attitude was out of the question. She had recourse to strategy.

"Oh!"

"Miss Mayfield!"

"You hurt my hand."

Jeff dropped it instantly. Miss Mayfield put it in the pocket of her sacque for security. Besides, it had been so bekissed that it seemed unpleasantly conscious.

"I wish you would tell me all about yourself," she went on, with a certain charming feminine submission of manner quite unlike her ordinary speech; "I should like to help you. Perhaps I can. You know I am quite independent; I mean——"

She paused, for Jeff's face betrayed no signs of sympathetic following.

"I mean I am what people call rich in my own right. I can do as I please with my own. If any of your trouble, Mr. Jeff, arises from want of money, or capital; if any consideration of that kind takes you away from your home; if I could save you *that trouble*, and find for you—perhaps a little nearer—that which you are seeking, I would be so glad to do it. You will find the world very wide, and very cold, Mr. Jeff," she continued, with a certain air of practical superiority quite natural to her, but explicable to her friends and acquaintances only as the consciousness of pecuniary independence; "and I wish you would be frank with me. Although I am a woman, I know something of business."

"I will be frank with you, miss," said Jeff, turning a colourless face upon her. "If you was ez rich as the Bank of California, and could throw your money on any fancy or whim that struck you at the moment; if you felt you could buy up any man and woman in California that was willing to be bought

up; and if me and my aunt were starving in the road, we wouldn't touch the money that we hadn't earned fairly, and didn't belong to us. No, miss, I ain't that sort o' man!"

How much of this speech, in its brusqueness and slang, was an echo of Yuba Bill's teaching, how much of it was a part of Jeff's inward weakness, I cannot say. He saw Miss Mayfield recoil from him. It added to his bitterness that his thought, for the first time voiced, appeared to him by no means as effective or powerful as he had imagined it would be, but he could not recede from it; and there was the relief that the worst had come, and was over now.

Miss Mayfield took her hand out of her pocket. "I don't think you quite understand me, Mr. Jeff," she said, quietly; "and I *hope* I don't understand you." She walked stiffly at his side for a few moments, but finally took the other side of the road. They had both turned, half unconsciously, back again to the "Half-way House."

Jeff felt, like all quarrel-seekers, righteous or unrighteous, the full burden of the fight. If he could have relieved his mind, and at the next moment leaped upon Yuba Bill's coach, and so passed away—without a further word of explanation—all would have been well. But to walk back with this girl, whom he had just shaken off, and who must now thoroughly hate him, was something he had not preconceived, in that delightful forecast of the imagination, when we determine what *we* shall say and do without the least consideration of what may be said or done to us in return. No quarrel proceeds exactly as we expect; people have such a way of behaving illogically! And here was Miss Mayfield, who was clearly derelict, and who should have acted under that conviction, walking along on the other

side of the road, trailing the splendour of her parasol in the dust like an offended goddess.

They had almost reached the house. "At what time do you go, Mr. Briggs?" asked the young lady quietly.

"At eleven to-night, by the up stage."

"I expect some friends by that stage—coming with my father."

"My aunt will take good care of them," said Jeff, a little bitterly.

"I have no doubt," responded Miss Mayfield, gravely; "but I was not thinking of that. I had hoped to introduce them to you to-morrow. But I shall not be up so late to-night. And I had better say good-bye to you now."

She extended the un-kissed hand. Jeff took it, but presently let the limp fingers fall through his own.

"I wish you good fortune, Mr. Briggs."

She made a grave little bow, and vanished into the house. But here, I regret to say, her lady-like calm also vanished. She upbraided her mother peevishly for obliging her to seek the escort of Mr. Briggs in her necessary exercise, and flung herself with an injured air upon the sofa.

"But I thought you liked this Mr. Briggs. He seems an accommodating sort of person."

"Very accommodating. Going away just as we are expecting company!"

"Going away?" said Mrs. Mayfield in alarm.

"Surely he must be told that we expect some preparation for our friends?"

"Oh," said Miss Mayfield, quickly, "his aunt will arrange *that*."

Mrs. Mayfield, habitually mystified at her daughter's moods, said no more. She, however, fulfilled her duty conscientiously by rising, throwing a wrap over the young girl, tucking it in at her feet,

and having, as it were, drawn a charitable veil over her peculiarities, left her alone.

At half-past ten the coach dashed up to the "Half-way House," with a flash of lights and a burst of cheery voices. Jeff, coming upon the porch, was met by Mr. Mayfield, accompanying a lady and two gentlemen; evidently the guests alluded to by his daughter. Accustomed as Jeff had become to Mr. Mayfield's patronizing superiority, it seemed unbearable now, and the easy indifference of the guest to his own presence touched him with a new bitterness. Here were *her* friends, who were to take his place! It was a relief to grasp Yuba Bill's large hand and stand with him alone beside the bar.

"I'm ready to go with you to-night, Bill," said Jeff, after a pause.

Bill put down his glass—a sign of absorbing interest.

"And these yar strangers I fetched?"

"Auntie will take care of them. I've fixed everything."

Bill laid both his powerful hands on Jeff's shoulders, backed him against the wall, and surveyed him with great gravity.

"Briggs's son clar through! A little off colour, but the grit all thar! Bully for you, Jeff." He wrung Jeff's hand between his own.

"Bill!" said Jeff, hesitatingly.

"Jeff!"

"You wouldn't mind my getting up on the box *now*, before all the folks get round?"

"I reckon not. Thar's the box-seat all ready for ye."

Climbing to his high perch, Jeff, indistinguishable in the darkness, looked out upon the porch and the moving figures of the passengers, on Bill growling out his orders to his active hostler, and on the twinkling lights of the hotel windows. In the

mystery of the night and the bitterness of his heart, everything looked strange. There was a light in Miss Mayfield's room, but the curtains were drawn. Once he thought they moved, but then, fearful of the fascination of watching them, he turned his face resolutely away.

Then, to his relief, the hour came; the passengers re-entered the coach; Bill had mounted the box; and was slowly gathering his reins, when a shrill voice rose from the porch.

"Oh, Jeff!"

Jeff leaned an anxious face out over the coach lamps.

It was Aunt Sally, breathless and on tiptoe, reaching with a letter. "Suthin you forgot!" Then, in a hoarse stage whisper, perfectly audible to every one: "From *her*!"

Jeff seized the letter with a burning face. The whip snapped, and the stage plunged forward into the darkness. Presently Yuba Bill reached down, coolly detached one of the coach lamps, and handed it to Jeff without a word.

Jeff tore open the envelope. It contained Cyrus Parker's bill receipted, and the writ. Another small enclosure contained ten dollars, and a few lines written in pencil in a large masculine business hand. By the light of the lamp Jeff read as follows:—

"I hope you will forgive me for having tried to help you even in this accidental way, before I know how strong were your objections to help from me. Nobody knows this but myself. Even Mr. Dodd thinks my father advanced the money. The ten dollars the rascal would have kept, but I made him disgorge it. I did it all while you were looking for the letter in the woods. Pray forget all about it, and any pain you may have had from

"J. M."

Frank and practical as this letter appeared to be, and, doubtless, as it was intended to be by its writer, the reader will not fail to notice that Miss Mayfield said nothing of having overheard Jeff's quarrel with the deputy, and left him to infer that that functionary had betrayed him. It was simply one of those unpleasant details not affecting the result, usually overlooked in feminine ethics.

For a moment Jeff sat pale and dumb, crushed under the ruins of his pride and self-love. For a moment he hated Miss Mayfield, small and triumphant! How she must have inwardly laughed at his speech that morning! With what refined cruelty she had saved this evidence of his humiliation, to work her vengeance on him now. He could not stand it! He could not live under it! He would go back and sell the house—his clothes—everything—to pay this wicked, heartless, cruel girl, that was killing—yes, killing——

A strong hand took the swinging lantern from his unsteady fingers, a strong hand possessed itself of the papers and Miss Mayfield's note, a strong arm was drawn around him—for his figure was swaying to and fro, his head was giddy, and his hat had fallen off—and a strong voice, albeit a little husky, whispered in his ear—

"Easy, boy! easy on the down grade. It'll all be one in a minit."

Jeff tried to comprehend him, but his brain was whirling.

"Pull yourself together, Jeff!" said Bill, after a pause. "Thar! Look yar!" he said suddenly. "*Do you think you can drive six?*"

The words recalled Jeff to his senses. Bill laid the six reins in his hands. A sense of life, of activity, of *power*, came back to the young man, as his fingers closed deliciously on the far-reaching, thrilling, living

leathern sinews that controlled the six horses, and seemed to be instinct and magnetic with their bounding life. Jeff, leaning back against them, felt the strong youthful tide rush back to his heart, and was himself again. Bill meantime took the lamp, examined the papers, and read Miss Mayfield's note. A grim smile stole over his face. After a pause, he said again, "Give Blue Grass her head, Jeff. D—n it, she ain't Miss Mayfield!"

Jeff relaxed the muscles of his wrists, so as to throw the thumb and forefingers a trifle forward. This simple action relieved Blue Grass, *alias* Miss Mayfield, and made the coach steadier and less jerky. Wonderful co-relation of forces.

"Thar!" said Yuba Bill, quietly putting the coach lamp back in its place; "you're better already. Thar's nothing like six horses to draw a woman out of a man. I've knowed a case where it took eight mustangs, but it was a mulatter from New Orleans, and they are pizen! Ye might hit up a little on the Pinto hoss—he ain't harmin' ye. So! Now, Jeff, take your time, and take it easy, and what's all this yer about?"

To control six fiery mustangs, and at the same time give picturesque and affecting exposition of the subtle struggles of Love and Pride, was a performance beyond Jeff's powers. He had recourse to an angry staccato, which somehow seemed to him as ineffective as his previous discourse to Miss Mayfield; he was a little incoherent, and perhaps mixed his impressions with his facts, but he nevertheless managed to convey to Bill some general idea of the events of the past three days.

"And she sent ye off after that letter, that wasn't thar, while she fixed things up with Dodd?"

"Yes," said Jeff, furiously.

"Ye needn't bully the Pinto colt, Jeff; he is doin'

his level best. And she snaked that 'ar ten dollars outer Dodd?"

"Yes; and sent it back to *me*. To ME, Bill! At such a time as this! As if I was dead broke!—a mere tramp. As if——"

"In course! in course!" said Bill, soothingly, yet turning his head aside to bestow a deceitful smile upon the trees that whirled beside him. "And ye told her ye didn't want her money?"

"Yes, Bill!—but it—it—it was *after* she had done this!"

"Surely! I'll take the lines now, Jeff."

He took them. Jeff relapsed into gloomy silence. The starlight of that dewless Sierran night was bright, and cold, and passionless. There was no moon to lead the fancy astray with its faint forbid mysteries and suggestions; nothing but a clear, greyish blue twilight, with sharply silhouetted shadows, pointed here and there with bright large-spaced constant stars. The deep breath of the pine-woods, the faint cool resinous spices of bay and laurel, at last brought surcease to his wounded spirit. The blessed weariness of exhausted youth stole tenderly on him. His head nodded, dropped. Yuba Bill, with a grim smile, drew him to his side, enveloped him in his blanket, and felt his head at last sink upon his own broad shoulder.

A few minutes later the coach drew up at the "Summit House." Yuba Bill did not dismount, an unusual and disturbing circumstance that brought the bar-keeper to the verandah.

"What's up, old man?"

"I am."

"Sworn off your reg'lar pizen?"

"My physician," said Bill, gravely, "hez ordered me dry champagne every three hours."

Nevertheless, the bar-keeper lingered.

"Who's that you're dry-nussin' up there?"

I regret that I may not give Yuba Bill's literal reply. It suggested a form of inquiry at once distant, indirect, outrageous, and impossible.

The bar-keeper flashed a lantern upon Jeff's curls and his drooping eyelashes and mustachios.

"It's that son o' Briggs o' Tuolumne—pooty boy, ain't he?"

Bill disdained a reply.

"Played himself out down there, I reckon. Left his rifle here in pawn."

"Young man," said Bill, gravely.

"Old man."

"Ef you're looking for a safe investment ez will pay ye better than forty-rod whiskey at two bits a glass, jist you bang onter that 'ar rifle. It may make your fortin yet, or save ye from a drunkard's grave." With this ungracious pleasantry he hurried his dilatory passengers back into the coach, cracked his whip, and was again upon the road. The lights of the "Summit House" presently dropped here and there into the wasting shadows of the trees. Another stretch through the close-set ranks of pines, another dash through the opening, another whirl and rattle by overhanging rocks, and the vehicle was swiftly descending. Bill put his foot on the brake, threw his reins loosely on the necks of his cattle, and looked leisurely back. The great mountain was slowly and steadily rising between them and the valley they quitted.

And at that same moment Miss Mayfield had crept from her bed, and, with a shawl around her pretty little figure, was pressing her eyes against a blank window of the "Half-way House," and wondering where *he* was now.

CHAPTER V.

THE "opening" suggested by Bill was not a fortunate one. Possibly views of business openings in the public-house line taken from the tops of stage-coaches are not as judicious as those taken from less exalted levels. Certain it is that the "good-will" of the "Lone Star House" promised little more pecuniary value than a conventional blessing. It was in an older and more thickly settled locality than the "Half-way House;" indeed, it was but half a mile away from Campville, famous in '49—a place with a history and a disaster. But young communities are impatient of settlements that through any accident fail to fulfil the extravagant promise of their youth, and the wounded hamlet of Campville had crept into the woods and died. The "Lone Star House" was an attempt to woo the passing travellers from another point; but its road led to Campville, and it was already touched by its dry-rot. Bill, who honestly conceived that the infusion of fresh young blood like Jeff's into the stagnant current would quicken it, had to confess his disappointment. "I thought ye could put some go into the shanty, Jeff," said Bill, "and make it lively and invitin'!" But the lack of vitality was not in the landlord, out in the guests. The regular customers were disappointed, vacant, hopeless men, who gathered listlessly on the verandah, and talked vaguely of the past. Their hollow-eyed, feeble impotency affected the stranger, even as it checked all ambition among themselves. Do what Jeff might, the habits of the locality were stronger than his individuality; the dead ghosts of the past Campville held their property by invisible mortmain.

In the midst of this struggle the "Half-way House" was sold. Spite of Bill's prediction, the pro-

ceed; barely paid Jeff's debts. Aunt Sally prevented any troublesome consideration of *her* future, by applying a small surplus of profit to the expenses of a journey back to her relatives in Kentucky. She wrote Jeff a letter of cheerless instruction, reminded him of the fulfilment of her worst prophecies regarding him, but begged him, in her absence, to rely solely upon the "Word." "For the sperrit killeth," she added vaguely. Whether this referred figuratively to Jeff's business, he did not stop to consider. He was more interested in the information that the Mayfields had removed to the "Summit Hotel" two days after he had left. "She allowed it was for her health's sake," continued Aunt Sally, "but I reckon it's another name for one of them city fellers who jined their party and is keepin' company with her now. They talk o' property and stocks and sich worldly trifles all the time, and it's easy to see their idees is set together. It's allowed at the Forks that Mr. Mayfield paid Parker's bill for you. I said it wasn't so, fur ye'd hev told me; but if it is so, Jeff, and ye didn't tell me, it was for only one puppos, and that wos that Mayfield bribed ye to brock off with his darter! That was *why* you went off so suddent, 'like a thief in the night,' and why Miss Mayfield never let on a word about you after you left—not even your name!

Jeff crushed the letter between his fingers, and, going behind the bar, poured out half a glass of stimulant and drank it. It was not the first time since he came to the "Lone Star House" that he had found this easy relief from his present thought; it was not the first time that he had found this dangerous ally of sure and swift service in bringing him up or down to that level of his dreary, sodden guests, so necessary to his trade. Jeff had not the excuse of the inborn drunkard's taste. He was

impulsive and extreme. At the end of the four weeks he came out on the porch one night as Bill drew up. "You must take me from this place to-night," he said, in a broken voice scarce like his own. "When we're on the road we can arrange matters, but I must go to-night."

"But where?" asked Bill.

"Anywhere! Only I must go from here. I shall go if I have to walk."

Bill looked hard at the young man. His face was flushed, his eyes blood-shot, and his hands trembled, not with excitement, but with a vacant, purposeless impotence. Bill looked a little relieved. "You've been drinking too hard. Jeff, I thought better of ye than that!"

"I think better of *myself* than that," said Jeff, with a certain wild, half-hysterical laugh, "and that is why I want to go. Don't be alarmed, Bill," he added; "I have strength enough to save myself, and I shall! But it isn't worth the struggle *here*."

He left the "Lone Star House" that night. He would, he said to Bill, go on to Sacramento, and try to get a situation as clerk or porter there; he was too old to learn a trade. He said little more. When, after forty-eight hours' inability to eat, drink, or sleep, Bill, looking at his haggard face and staring eyes, pressed him to partake, medicinally, from a certain black bottle, Jeff gently put it aside, and saying, with a sad smile, "I can get along without it; I've gone through more than this," left his mentor in a state of mingled admiration and perplexity.

At Sacramento he found a commercial "opening." But certain habits of personal independence, combined with a direct truthfulness and simplicity, were not conducive to business advancement. He was frank, and, in his habits, impulsive and selfishly outspoken. His employer, a good-natured man,

successful in his way, anxious to serve his own interest and Jeff's equally, strove and laboured with him, but in vain. His employer's wife, a still more good-natured woman, successful in her way, and equally anxious to serve Jeff's interests and her own, also strove with him as unsuccessfully. At the end of a month he discharged his employer, after a simple, boyish, utterly unbusiness-like interview, and secretly tore up the wife's letter. "I don't know what to make of that chap," said the husband to his wife; "he's about as civilized as an Injun." "And as conceited," added the lady.

Howbeit he took his conceit, his sorrows, his curls, mustachios, broad shoulders, and fifty dollars into humble lodgings in a back street. The days succeeding this were the most restful he had passed since he left the "Half-way House." To wander through the town, half conscious of its strangeness and novel bustling life, and to dream of a higher and nobler future with Miss Mayfield—to feel no responsibility but that of waiting—was, I regret to say, a pleasure to him. He made no acquaintances except among the poorer people and the children. He was sometimes hungry, he was always poorly clad, but these facts carried no degradation with them now. He read much, and in his way—Jeff's way—tried to improve his mind; his recent commercial experience had shown him various infelicities in his speech and accent. He learned to correct certain provincialisms. He was conscious that Miss Mayfield must have noticed them, yet his odd irrational pride kept him from ever regretting them, if they had offered a possible excuse for her treatment of him.

On one of these nights his steps chanced to lead him into a gambling saloon. The place had offered no temptation to him; his dealings with the goddess

Chance had been of less active nature. Nevertheless he placed his last five dollars on the turn of a card. He won. He won repeatedly; his gains had reached a considerable sum, when, flushed, excited, and absorbed, he was suddenly conscious that he had become the centre of observation at the table. Looking up, he saw that the dealer had paused, and, with the cards in his motionless fingers, was gazing at him with fixed eyes and a white face.

Jeff rose and passed hurriedly to his side. "What's the matter?" he asked.

The gambler shrunk slightly as he approached. "What's your name?"

"Briggs."

"God!—I knew it! How much have you got there?" he continued, in a quick whisper, pointing to Jeff's winnings.

"Five hundred dollars."

"I'll give you double if you'll get up and quit the board!"

"Why?" asked Jeff, haughtily.

"Why?" repeated the man, fiercely; "why? Well, your father shot himself thar; where you're sittin', at this table;" and he added, with a half-forced, half-hysterical laugh, "*he's playin' at me over your shoulders!*"

Jeff lifted a face as colourless as the gambler's own, went back to his seat, and placed his entire gains on a single card. The gambler looked at him nervously, but dealt. There was a pause, a slight movement where Jeff stood, and then a simultaneous cry from the players as they turned towards him. But his seat was vacant. "Run after him! Call him back! *He's won again!*" But he had vanished utterly.

How he left, or what indeed followed, he never clearly remembered. His movements must have been automatic, for when, two hours later, he found

himself at the "Pioneer" coach office, with his carpet-bag and blankets by his side, he could not recall how or why he had come! He had a dumb impression that he had barely escaped some dire calamity—rather that he had only temporarily averted it—and that he was still in the shadow of some impending catastrophe of destiny. He must go somewhere, he must do something to be saved! He had no money, he had no friends; even Yuba Bill had been transferred to another route, miles away. Yet, in the midst of this stupefaction, it was a part of his strange mental condition that trivial details of Miss Mayfield's face and figure, and even apparel, were constantly before him, to the exclusion of consecutive thought. A collar she used to wear, a ribbon she had once tied around her waist, a blue vein in her dropped eyelid, a curve in her soft, full, bird-like throat, the arch of her instep in her small boots—all these were plainer to him than the future, or even the present. But a voice in his ear, a figure before his abstracted eyes, at last broke upon his reverie.

"Jeff Briggs!"

Jeff mechanically took the outstretched hand of a young clerk of the Pioneer Coach Company, who had once accompanied Yuba Bill and stopped at the "Half-way House." He endeavoured to collect his thoughts; here seemed to be an opportunity to go somewhere!

"What are you doing now?" said the young man, briskly.

"Nothing," said Jeff, simply.

"Oh, I see—going home!"

Home! The word stung sharply through Jeff's benumbed consciousness.

"No," he stammered, "that is——"

"Look here, Jeff," broke in the young man, "I've

got a chance for you that don't fall in a man's way every day. Wells, Fargo & Co.'s treasure messenger from Robinson's Ferry to Memphis has slipped out. The place is vacant. I reckon I can get it for you."

"When?"

"Now, to-night."

"I'm ready."

"Come, then."

In ten minutes they were in the company's office, where its manager, a man famous in those days for his boldness and shrewdness, still lingered in the despatch of business.

The young clerk briefly but deferentially stated certain facts. A few questions and answers followed, of which Jeff heard only the words "Tuolumne" and "Yuba Bill."

"Sit down, Mr. Briggs. Good night, Roberts."

The young clerk, with an encouraging smile to Jeff, bowed himself out as the manager seated himself at his desk and began to write.

"You know the country pretty well between the Fork and the Summit, Mr. Briggs?" he said, without looking up.

"I lived there," said Jeff.

"That was some months ago, wasn't it?"

"Six months," said Jeff, with a sigh.

"It's changed for the worse since your house was shut up. There's a long stretch of unsettled country infested by bad characters."

Jeff sat silent.

"Briggs."

"Sir?"

"The last man but one who precedes you was shot by road agents." *

"Yes, sir."

* Highway robbers.

"We lost sixty thousand dollars up there."

"Yes?"

"Your father was Briggs of Tuolumne?"

"Yes, sir." Jeff's head dropped, but, glancing shyly up, he saw a pleasant smile on his questioner's face. He was still writing rapidly, but was apparently enjoying at the same time some pleasant recollection.

"Your father and I lost nearly sixty thousand dollars together one night, ten years ago, when we were both younger."

"Yes, sir," said Jeff, dubiously.

"But it was *our own money*, Jeff."

"Yes, sir."

"Here's your appointment," he said briefly, throwing away his pen, folding what he had written, and handing it to Jeff. It was the first time that he had looked at him since he entered. He now held out his hand, grasped Jeff's, and said, "Good night!"

CHAPTER VI.

It was late the next evening when Jeff drew up at the coach office at Robinson's Ferry, where he was to await the coming of the Summit coach. His mind, lifted only temporarily out of its benumbed condition during his interview with the manager, again fell back into its dull abstraction. Fully embarked upon his dangerous journey, accepting all the meaning of the trust imposed upon him, he was yet vaguely conscious that he did not realize its full importance. He had neither the dread nor the stimulation of coming danger. He had faced death before in the boyish confidence of animal spirits; his pulse now was scarcely stirred with anticipation. Once or twice before, in the extravagance of his pas-

sion, he had imagined himself rescuing Miss Mayfield from danger, or even dying for her. During his journey his mind had dwelt fully and minutely on every detail of their brief acquaintance; she was continually before him, the tones of her voice were in his ears, the suggestive touch of her fingers, the thrill that his lips had felt when he kissed them—all were with him now, but only as a memory. In his coming fate, in his future life, he saw her not. He believed it was a premonition of coming death.

He made a few preparations. The company's agent had told him that the treasure, letters, and despatches, which had accumulated to a considerable amount, would be handed to him on the box; and that the arms and ammunition were in the boot. A less courageous and determined man might have been affected by the cold, practical brutality of certain advice and instructions offered him by the agent, but Jeff recognized this compliment to his determination, even before the agent concluded his speech by saying, "But I reckon they knew what they were about in the lower office when they sent *you* up. I dare say you kin give me p'int, ef ye cared to, for all ye're soft spoken. There are only four passengers booked through; we hev to be a little partikler, suspectin' spies! Two of the four ye kin depend upon to get the top o' their d—d heads blowed off the first fire," he added, grimly.

At ten o'clock the Summit coach flashed, rattled, glittered, and snapped, like a disorganized firework, up to the door of the company's office. A familiar figure, but more than usually truculent and aggressive, slowly descended with violent oaths from the box. Without seeing Jeff, it strode into the office.

"Now then," said Yuba Bill, addressing the agent, "whar's that God-forsaken fool that Wells, Fargo & Co. hev sent up yar to take charge o' their treasure?"

Because I'd like to introduce him to the champion idgit of Calaveras county, that's been selected to go to h—ll with him; and that's me, Yuba Bill! P'int him out. Don't keep me waitin'!"

'The agent grinned and pointed to Jeff.

Both men recoiled in astonishment. Yuba Bill was the first to recover his speech.

"It's a lie!" he roared; "or somebody has been putting up a job on ye, Jeff! Because I've been twenty years in the service, and am such a nat'ral born mule that when the company strokes my back and sez, 'You're the on'y mule we kin trust, Bill,' I starts up and goes out as a blasted wooden figger-head for road agents to lay fur and practise on, it don't follow that *you've* any call to go."

"It was my own speaking, Bill," said Jeff, with one of his old, sweet, boyish smiles. "I didn't know *you* were to drive. But you're not going back on me now, Bill, are you?—you're not going to send me off with another volunteer?"

"That be d—d!" growled Bill. Nevertheless, for ten minutes he reviled the Pioneer Coach Company with picturesque imprecation, tendered his resignation repeatedly to the agent, and at the end of that time, as everybody expected, mounted the box, and with a final malediction, involving the whole settlement, was off.

On the road, Jeff, in a few hurried sentences, told his story. Bill scarcely seemed to listen. "Look yar, Jeff," he said, suddenly.

"Yes, Bill."

"If the worst happens, and ye go under, you'll tell your father, *if I don't happen to see him first*, it wasn't no job of mine, and I did my best to get ye out of it."

"Yes," said Jeff, in a faint voice.

"It mayn't be so bad," said Bill, softening; "they

know, d—n 'em, we've got a pile abroad, ez well ez if they seed that agent gin it ye, but they also know we've pre-pared!"

"I wasn't thinking of that, Bill; I was thinking of my father." And he told Bill of the gambling episode at Sacramento.

"D'ye mean to say ye left them hounds with a thousand dollars of yer hard-earned——"

"Gambling gains, Bill," interrupted Jeff, quietly.

"Exactly! Well!" Bill subsided into an incoherent growl. After a few moments' pause, he began again. "Yer ready as ye used to be with a six-shooter, Jeff, time's when ye was a boy, and I uster chuck half-dollars in the air fur ye to make warts on?"

"I reckon," said Jeff, with a faint smile.

"Thar's two p'int's on the road to be looked to: the woods beyond the blacksmith's shop that uster be; the fringe of alder and buckeye by the crossing below your house—p'int's where they kin fetch you without a show. Thar's two ways o' meetin' them thar. One way ez to pull up and trust to luck and brag. The other way is to whip up and yell, and send the whole six kiting by like h—ll!"

"Yes," said Jeff.

"The only drawback to that plan is this: the road lies along the edge of a precipice, straight down a thousand feet into the river. Ef these devils get a shot into any one o' the six and it drops, the coach turns sharp off, and down we go, the whole kerboodle of us, plump into the Stanislaus!"

"And they don't get the money," said Jeff, quietly.

"Well, no!" replied Yuba Bill, staring at Jeff, whose face was set as a flint against the darkness. "I should reckon not." He then drew a long breath, glanced at Jeff again, and said between his teeth, "Well, I'm d—d!"

At the next station they changed horses, Bill personally supervising, especially as regarded the welfare and proper condition of Blue Grass, who here was brought out as a leader. Formerly there was no change of horses at this station, and this novelty excited Jeff's remark. "These yar chaps say thar's no station at the Summit now," growled Bill, in explanation; "the hotel is closed, and it's all private property, bought by some chap from 'Frisco. Thar ought to be a law agin such doin's!"

This suggested obliteration of the last traces of Miss Mayfield seemed to Jeff as only a corroboration

The moon shone brightly and peacefully, a fact pointed out by Bill as unfavourably deepening the shadows of the woods, and bringing the coach and the road into greater relief.

An hour passed. What were Yuba Bill's thoughts are not a part of this history; that they were turbulent and aggressive might be inferred from the occasional growls and interjected oaths that broke from

his lips. But Jeff, strange anomaly, due perhaps to youth and moonlight, was wrapped in a sensuous dream of Miss Mayfield, of the scent of her dark hair as he had drawn her to his side, of the outlines of her sweet form, that had for a moment lightly touched his own—of anything, I fear, but the death he believed he was hastening to. But——

"Jeff," said Bill, in an unmistakable tone.

"Yes," said Jeff.

"*That ar clump o' buckeye on the ridge!* Ready there!" (Leaning over the box, to the guards within.) A responsive rustle in the coach, which now bounded forward as if instinct with life and intelligence.

"Jeff," said Bill, in an odd, altered voice, "take the lines a minit." Jeff took them. Bill stooped towards the boot. A peaceful moment! A peaceful outlook from the coach; the white moonlit road stretching to the ridge, no noise but the steady gallop of the horses!

Then a yellow flash, breaking from the darkness of the buckeye; a crack like the snap of a whip; Yuba Bill steadying himself for a moment, and then dropping at Jeff's feet!

"They got me, Jeff! But—*I drawed their fire!* Don't drop the lines! Don't speak! For—they—think I'm *you* and *you me!*"

The flash had illuminated Jeff as to the danger, as to Bill's sacrifice, but above all, and overwhelming all, to a thrilling sense of his own power and ability.

Yet he sat like a statue. Six masked figures had appeared from the very ground, clinging to the bits of the horses. The coach stopped. Two wild purposeless shots—the first and last fired by the guards—were answered by the muzzles of six rifles pointed into the windows, and the passengers foolishly and impotently filed out into the road.

"Now, Bill," said a voice, which Jeff instantly recognized as the blacksmith's, "we won't keep ye long. So hand down the treasure."

The man's foot was on the wheel; in another instant he would be beside Jeff, and discovery was certain. Jeff leaned over and unhooked the coach lamp, as if to assist him with its light. As if in turning, he *stumbled*, broke the lamp, ignited the kerosene, and scattered the wick and blazing fluid over the haunches of the wheelers! The maddened animals gave one wild plunge forwards, the coach followed twice its length, throwing the blacksmith under its wheels, and driving the other horses towards the bank. But as the lamp broke in Jeff's right hand, his practised left hand discharged its hidden Derringer at the head of the robber who had held the bit of Blue Grass, and throwing the useless weapon away, he laid the whip smartly on her back. She leaped forward madly, dragging the other leaders with her, and in the next moment they were free and wildly careering down the grade.

A dozen shots followed them. The men were protected by the coach, but Yuba Bill groaned.

"Are you hit, again?" asked Jeff, hastily. He had forgotten his saviour.

"No; but the horses are! I felt 'em! Look at 'em, Jeff."

Jeff had gathered up the almost useless reins. The horses were running away; but Blue Grass was limping.

"For God's sake," said Bill, desperately dragging his wounded figure above the dash-board, "keep her up! *Lift her up*, Jeff, till we pass the curve. Don't let her drop or we're——"

"Can you hold the reins?" said Jeff, quickly.

"Give 'em here!"

Jeff passed them to the wounded man. Then,

with his bowie-knife between his teeth, he leaped over the dash-board on the backs of the wheelers. He extinguished the blazing drops that the wind had not blown out on their smarting haunches, and with the skill and instinct of a Mexican *vaquero*, made his way over their turbulent tossing backs to Blue Grass, cut her traces and reins, and as the vehicle neared the curve, with a sharp lash, drove her to the bank, where she sank even as the coach darted by. Bill uttered a feeble "hurrah!" but at the same moment the reins dropped from his fingers, and he sank at the bottom of the boot.

Riding postilion-wise, Jeff could control the horses. The dangerous curve was passed, but not the possibility of pursuit. The single leader he was bestriding was panting—more than that, he was sweating, and, from the evidence of Jeff's hands, sweating blood! Back of his shoulder was a jagged hole, from which his life blood was welling. The off-wheel horse was limping too. That last volley was no foolish outburst of useless rage, but was deliberate and premeditated skill. Jeff drew the reins, and as the coach stopped, the horse he was riding fell dead. Into the silence that followed broke the measured beat of horses' hoofs on the road above. He was pursued!

To select the best horse of the remaining unscathed three, to break open the boot and place the treasure on his back, and to abandon and leave the senseless Bill lying there, was the unhesitating work of a moment. Great heroes and great lovers are invariably one-ideal men, and Jeff was at that moment both.

Eighty thousand dollars in gold dust and Jeff's weight was a handicap. Nevertheless he flew forward like the wind. Presently he fell to listening. A certain hoof-beat in the rear was growing more

distinct. A bitter thought flashed through his mind. He looked back. Over the hill appeared the foremost of his pursuers. It was the blacksmith, mounted on the fleetest horse in the county—Jeff's own horse—Rabbit!

But there are compensations in all new trials. As Jeff faced round again, he saw he had reached the open table-land, and the bleak walls and ghastly untenanted windows of the "Half-way House" rose before him in the distance. Jeff was master of the ground here! He was entering the shadow of the woods—Miss Mayfield's woods! and there was a cut off from the road, and a bridle path, known only to himself, hard by. To find it, leap the roadside ditch, dash through the thicket, and rein up by the road again, was swiftly done.

Take a gentle woman, betray her trust, outrage her best feelings, drive her into a corner, and you have a fury! Take a gentle, trustful man, abuse him, show him the folly of this gentleness and kindness, prove to him that it is weakness, drive him into a corner, and you have a savage! And it was this savage, with an Indian's memory, and an Indian's eye and ear, that suddenly confronted the blacksmith.

What more! A single shot from a trained hand and one-idea'd intellect settled the blacksmith's business, and temporarily ended this Iliad! I say temporarily, for Mr. Dodd, formerly deputy-sheriff, prudently pulled up at the top of the hill, and observing his principal bend his head forwards and act like a drunken man, until he reeled, limp and sideways, from the saddle, and noticing further that Jeff took his place with a well-filled saddle-bag, concluded to follow cautiously and unobtrusively in the rear.

CHAPTER VII.

BUT Jeff saw him not. With mind and will bent on one object—to reach the first habitation, the “Summit,” and send back help and assistance to his wounded comrade—he urged Rabbit forward. The mare knew her rider, but he had no time for caresses. Through the smarting of his hands he had only just noticed that they were badly burned, and the skin was peeling from them; he had confounded the blood that was flowing from a cut in his scalp, with that from the wounded horse. It was one hour yet to the “Summit,” but the road was good, the moon was bright, he knew what Rabbit could do, and it was not yet ten o'clock.

As the white outbuildings and irregular outlines of the “Summit House” began to be visible, Jeff felt a singular return of his former dreamy abstraction. The hour of peril, anger, and excitement he had just passed through seemed something of years ago, or rather to be obliterated with all else that had passed since he had looked upon that scene. Yet it was all changed—strangely changed! What Jeff had taken for the white, wooden barns and outhouses, were greenhouses and conservatories. The “Summit Hotel” was a picturesque villa, nestling in the self-same trees, but approached through cultivated fields, dwellings of labourers, park-like gates and walls, and all the bountiful appointments of wealth and security. Jeff thought of Yuba Bill’s malediction, and understood it as he gazed.

The barking of dogs announced his near approach to the principal entrance. Lights were still burning in the upper windows of the house and its offices. He was at once surrounded by the strange

medley of a Californian ranchero's service, peons, Chinese, and *vaqueros*. Jeff briefly stated his business. "Ah, Carrajo!" This was a matter for the major-domo, or, better, the *padrone*—Wilson! But the *padrone*, Wilson, called out by the tumult, appeared in person—a handsome, resolute, middle-aged man, who in a twinkling dispersed the group to barn and stable with a dozen orders of preparation, and then turned to Jeff.

"You are hurt; come in!"

Jeff followed him dazedly into the house. The same sense of remote abstraction, of vague dreaminess, was overcoming him. He resented it, and fought against it, but in vain; he was only half conscious that his host had bathed his head and given him some slight restorative, had said something to him soothingly, and had left him. Jeff wondered if he had fainted, or was about to faint—he had a nervous dread of that womanish weakness—or if he were really hurt worse than he believed. He tried to master himself and grasp the situation by minutely examining the room. It was luxuriously furnished; Jeff had but once before sat in such an arm-chair as the one that half embraced him, and as a boy he had dim recollections of a life like this, of which his father was part. To poor Jeff, with his throbbing head, his smarting hands, and his lapsing moments of half forgetfulness, this seemed to be a return of his old premonition. There was a vague perfume in the room, like that which he remembered when he was in the woods with Miss Mayfield. He believed he was growing faint again, and was about to rise, when the door opened behind him.

"Is there anything we can do for you? Mr. Wilson has gone to seek your friend, and has sent Manuel for a doctor."

Her voice! He rose hurriedly, turned; *she* was standing in the doorway!

She uttered a slight cry, turned very pale, advanced towards him, stopped and leaned against the chimney-piece.

"I didn't know it was *you*."

With her actual presence Jeff's dream and weakness fled. He rose up before her, his old bashful, stammering, awkward self.

"I didn't know *you* lived here, Miss Mayfield."

"If you had sent word you were coming," said Miss Mayfield, recovering her colour brightly in one cheek.

The possibility of having sent a messenger in advance to advise Miss Mayfield of his projected visit did not strike Jeff as ridiculous. Your true lover is far beyond such trivialities. He accepted the rebuke meekly. He said he was sorry.

"You might have known it."

"What, Miss Mayfield?"

"That I was here, if you *wished* to know."

Jeff did not reply. He bowed his head and clasped his burned hands together. Miss Mayfield saw their raw surfaces, saw the ugly cut on his head, pitied him, but went on hastily, with both cheeks burning, to say, womanlike, what was then deepest in her heart.

"My brother-in-law told me your adventure; but I did not know until I entered this room that the gentleman I wished to help was one who had once rejected my assistance, who had misunderstood me, and cruelly insulted me! Oh, forgive me, Mr. Briggs" (Jeff had risen). "I did not mean *that*. But, Mr. Jeff—Jeff—Oh!" (She had caught his tortured hand and had wrung a movement of pain from him.) "Oh, dear! what did I do now? But, Mr. Jeff, after what had passed, after what you said to me when you went

away, when you were at that dreadful place, Campville, when you were two months in Sacramento, you might—you ought to have let me know it!"

Jeff turned. Her face, more beautiful than he had ever seen it, alive and eloquent with every thought that her woman's speech but half-expressed, was very near his—so near, that under her honest eyes the wretched scales fell from his own, his self-wrought shackles crumbled away, and he dropped upon his knees at her feet as she sank into the chair he had quitted. Both her hands were grasped in her own.

"You went away, and I *stayed*," she said, reflectively.

"I had no home, Miss Mayfield."

"Nor had I. I had to buy this," she said, with delicious simplicity, "and bring a family here too," she added, "in case *you*——" She stopped, with a slight colour.

"Forgive me," said Jeff, burying his face in her hands.

"Jeff."

"Jessie."

"Don't you think you were a *little*—just a little—mean?"

"Yes."

Miss Mayfield uttered a faint sigh. He looked into her anxious cheeks and eyes, his arm stole round her; their lips met for the first time in one long lingering kiss. Then, I fear, for the second time.

"Jeff," said Miss Mayfield, suddenly becoming practical and sweetly possessory, "you must have your hands bound up in cotton."

"Yes," said Jeff, cheerfully.

"And you must go instantly to bed."

Jeff stared.

"Because my sister will think it very late for me to be sitting up with a gentleman."

The idea that Miss Mayfield was responsible to anybody was something new to Jeff. But he said hastily, "I must stay and wait for Bill. He risked his life for me."

"Oh yes! You must tell me all about it. I may wait for *that*."

Jeff possessed himself of the chair; in some way he also possessed himself of Miss Mayfield without entirely dispossessing her. Then he told his story. He hesitated over the episode of the blacksmith. "I'm afraid I killed him, Jessie."

Miss Mayfield betrayed little concern at this possible extreme measure with a dangerous neighbour. "He cut your head, Jeff," she said, passing her little hand through his curls.

"No," said Jeff, hastily; "that must have been done *before*."

"Well," said Miss Mayfield, conclusively, "he would if he'd dared. And you brought off that wretched money in spite of him. Poor dear Jeff!"

"Yes," said Jeff, kissing her.

"Where is it?" asked Jessie, looking round the room.

"Oh, just out there!"

"Out where?"

"On my horse, you know, outside the door," continued Jeff, a little uncasily, as he rose. "I'll go and——"

"You careless boy," said Miss Mayfield, jumping up, "I'll go with you."

They passed out on the porch together, holding each other's hands, like children. The forgotten Rabbit was not there. Miss Mayfield called a *vaquero*.

"Ah, yes!—the *caballero's* horse. Of a certainty the other *caballero* had taken it!"

"The other *caballero*!" gasped Jeff.

"*Si, Señor.* The one who arrived with you, or a moment, the very next moment, after you. 'Your friend,' he said."

Jeff staggered against the porch, and cast one despairing, reproachful look at Miss Mayfield.

"Oh, Jeff! Jeff! don't look so! I know I ought not to have kept you! It's a mistake, Jeff, believe me."

"It's no mistake," said Jeff, hoarsely. "Go!" he said, turning to the *vaquero*, "go!—bring——" But his speech failed. He attempted to gesticulate with his hands, ran forward a few steps, staggered, and fell fainting on the ground.

"Help me with the *caballero* into the blue room," said Miss Mayfield, white as Jeff. "And hark ye, Manuel! You know every ruffian, man or woman, on this road. That horse and those saddle-bags must be here to-morrow, if you have to pay *double what they're worth!*"

"*Si, Señora.*"

Jeff went off into fever, into delirium, into helpless stupor. From time to time he moaned "Bill," and "the treasure." On the third day, in a lucid interval, as he lay staring at the wall, Miss Mayfield put in his hand a letter from the company, acknowledging the receipt of the treasure, thanking him for his zeal, and enclosing a handsome cheque.

Jeff sat up, and put his hands to his head.

"I told you it was taken by mistake, and was easily found," said Miss Mayfield, "didn't I?"

"Yes,—and Bill?"

"You know he is so much better that he expects to leave us next week."

"And—Jessie!"

"There—go to sleep!"

At the end of a week she introduced Jeff to her sister-in-law, having previously run her fingers

through his hair to ensure that becomingness to his curls which would better indicate his moral character; and spoke of him as one of her oldest Californian friends.

At the end of two weeks she again presented him as her affianced husband—a long engagement of a year being just passed. Mr. Wilson, who was bored by the mountain life, undertaken to please his rich wife and richer sister, saw a chance of escape here, and bore willing testimony to the distant Mr. and Mrs. Mayfield of the excellence of Miss Jessie's choice. And Yuba Bill was Jeff's best man.

The name of Briggs remained a power in Tuolumne and Calaveras county. Mr. and Mrs. Briggs never had but one word of disagreement or discussion. One day, Jeff, looking over some old accounts of his wife's, found an unreceipted, unvouched-for expenditure of twenty thousand dollars. "What is this for, Jessie?" he asked.

"Oh, it's all right, Jeff!"

But here the now business-like and practical Mr. Briggs, father of a family, felt called upon to make some general remarks regarding the necessity of exactitude in accounts, etc.

"But I'd rather not tell you, Jeff."

"But you ought to, Jessie."

"Well then, dear, it was to get those saddle-bags of yours from that rascal, Dodd," said little Mrs. Briggs, meekly.

PETER SCHROEDER.

WHEN we heard that Peter Schroeder had "struck it rich," or, to paraphrase the local idiom, had that morning taken fifty thousand dollars from a suddenly developed "pocket" in his claim, only one expression, that of sincere congratulation, went up from Spanish Gulch. It would, perhaps, be wrong to say that this feeling arose from any instinctive perception of his fitness for good fortune, or even of his practical deserts. Spanish Gulch was seldom moved by such delicate ethics. But he had always been a loveable figure in its rude life. His quaint, serious good nature; his touching belief in ourselves as representative Americans, and the legitimate results of those free institutions he admired so in theory; his innocent adoption of our slang, and often of our vices, which made even an oath or vulgarism from his lips as harmless and irresponsible as from a child's—all this gave "Dutch Pete," as he loved to be called, a certain place in our affections which no stroke of enviable good fortune could imperil. More than this, I think we took a great satisfaction in believing that in some way *we* were part of that Providence which had so blessed him. A few, I think, intimated as much. "I'm so glad I allus told the old man to stick to that claim," said one, with an air of wearied well-doing; "I allus

kept him up to the rack, and I reckon he now sees the benefit of my four years' experience in these parts." "Only yesterday," said another, "I lent him a pick, scein' his was rather shaky,—and they say thar's luck in old tools in green hands."

A majority of the camp called upon him at once. The result of their visit satisfied them. Unchanged, unaltered by good fortune, Peter Schroeder welcomed them in his old simple way, and in that old simple, blundering slang which, to the delight of the camp, he was pleased to accept as idiomatic American speech. He stood beside a table covered with a vivid red blanket, which displayed from this vantage a huge fragment of decomposed quartz, dazzlingly streaked and honeycombed with the precious metal. Above it hung a placard—the gift of a native humourist—bearing the legend, "Welcome, little stranger."

"Come in, poys, and tondt pe pashful. Sits down from de front! De elefant now goes round mit you. De pand pegins to play. Dare she ish—look at it, shentlemans! You dakes your money and you bays your schoice. Ha! ha! Vot for a strike ist dot? Eh? How high is dot, poys?"

When the laugh at his characteristic version of a slang phrase in the last sentence had subsided, some one asked him what he intended to do, now that he was a rich man.

"Well, poys, dot's shoost it. I goes to Washington *first*. I looks round and maype I finds Dick Unterwoots, and I goes mit him mit de army—and I fights a little for de Union." The Dick Underwood here alluded to had recently exchanged his long-handled Californian shovel for the sword, and was now, in this last year of the Civil War, a colonel.

"But you'll get killed, Pete, and what's the good of your money then?"

"So! I sends it first to my fader and moder in Shermamy."

"But it's none of your funeral, Pete. You're only a blank Dutchman."

"Eh—a Dootchman! Vell, vot's Sigel, eh? Vot's Rosenkrans, eh? Vot's Heintzleman? Vot's Carl Schurz, eh?"

In vain did Spanish Gulch point out the egregious folly of a rich alien engaging in a domestic quarrel; Peter was firm in his determination. And Spanish Gulch, having by experience learned to respect his dull obstinacy in those matters of his private conscience which did not directly interfere with his duties to the camp, yielded the point gracefully, and gave him—in one farewell debauch—their half-maledictory valediction.

Peter Schroeder was as good as his word. Within three weeks he entered the Army of the Potomac, and served until the Richmond surrender. It is to be recorded that, although faithful, loyal, honest, and brave, only a sergeant's chevron marked his advancement. Perhaps he was not ambitious; possibly old habits of military servitude kept him out of the political manœuvrings of these citizen bayonets; perhaps he had no personal friends at Washington; perhaps he was a little dull. But it is to be also recorded that his dogged devotion to *his* theories of the great Republican principles for which he was contending never faltered amidst the free and outspoken criticism of superiors and general grumbling of these citizen camps. Malcontents feared him, even good patriots quite misunderstood his sentimental convictions—he was a confusion to his comrades as often as he was to the enemy. I close his brief military record with a story still extant, but until now imperfect in its details. A gallant Confederate officer, and a descendant of the

Virginian founders of the Republic, found himself, after the shattered onset of a brave but unsuccessful charge, lying wounded and crippled before the earthwork of a battery, deserted by his men and confronted only by the guns of his adversary, and the flag his ancestors had created flaunting in his face! "I looked up, gentlemen," he said, "and the sergeant of the Yankee battery saw me, and at the risk of his life crept down and dragged me into the works. He was a German; so I felt thankful that I wasn't under obligations to a Yankee. But what did he do? Why, gentleman, this d—d Dutchman—who couldn't speak the language plainly—who hadn't, I solemnly believe, been a fortnight in America, he looks down at me, and, pointing to my crippled leg, says, 'Aha! dot's wot you gets for fightin' against *de old flag!*' If a mule had kicked me I couldn't have felt meaner." The mule that had kicked this gallant gentleman was Peter Schroeder. But it was a Parthian kick. A few days later he was honourably discharged, drew his back-pay and bounty, and sailed for Germany.

* * * * *

Fifteen years had elapsed. Peter Schroeder, much stouter and quite bald, sat in that inevitable latticed summer-house which is one of the sacred outdoor Penates of every Rhenish householder, and seriously sipped his Moselle wine. He was not thinking that his curiously wrought iron garden-chair was not as comfortable as an American rocker or arm-chair—he was long past that grumbling; he was not thinking the table too high and insecure for his feet to rest on, for Frau Schroeder had in the first year of his married life interdicted that American attitude of reflection and bibulous enjoyment. He was not looking at the inevitable little fountain, whose stone basin suggested a hasty provision against

a leak from some invisible water-cask, nor at the inevitable little grotto—a child's playground of bright shells and pebbles artistically arranged by a grown-up player. None of these, nor even the statue of Germania looking like Lorelei with a helmet, nor of Lorelei looking like Germania with a harp, nor even of a bust of the good old Emperor, looking always like his own august self, and regarding reprehensible mythology with fatherly forbearance, attracted Peter's attention. His serious blue eyes were filmy and abstracted; the pinky red of his round cheeks was a little deeper for that digestive glow known in the rich vernacular of his analytical nation as "*Ess fieber*;" his respiration was slightly stertorous, and his pipe had gone out idly in his hand—Peter was dreaming.

Of the Past. Of the fifteen long years that had flown since he arrived, almost a stranger, in his own land; of his reception by his few old friends—a reception given to a new Peter whom they had evidently never known; of the joy of his old parents—a joy tempered with a kind of awe at his fortune and his novel ideas and heresies; of the match-making of his parents that ended in his betrothal to the well-born but slightly dowered Fräulein Von Hummel; of the marriage that smoothed those parents' dying pillow, but left Peter's bridal couch lonelier than before; of his relegation to a new life to which he was stranger than ever.

Of the monotony of those days, of the monotony of all outward signs and symbols, band-playing, concert-singing, picture-viewing, troops parading night and morning before his window, of festivals, of fêtes, of celebrations of all conceivable things to celebrate,—all alike—uniform, theatrical, and unreal, and yet, too, all established with precedent, and

often reinforced with the serene presence of hereditary greatness. Of the monotony of his home life; of the monotony of five meals a day seriously considered and dutifully performed; of betrothals and love-making under the parental and public eye; of sentimental hand-shakings and speech-makings to bride and bridegroom, and the pointed obtrusion of domestic and personal affairs before the world, as shown in the sentimental public advertisement of such conventionalities as births, deaths, and marriages.

Of the great war with France, which for ever estopped his voluble reminiscences of his former transatlantic military career, by leaving him no longer an authority in slaughter and gunpowder, rekindled his old ardour for *Der Vaterland*, dragged him into its seething vortex, and left him, at last, stranded in his own town, with more parading, more rattle of drums, more celebrations to celebrate, more precedents, and, in fact, more settled convictions to combat than ever.

A clap of thunder recalled his wandering senses. Looking up, he saw above the lindens that stood in his garden a blue-black velvety cloud. It was the natural climax of a sultry summer's day; but Peter's thoughts were so dark that it seemed to be as ominous as the cloud that rose above the Arabian fisherman's jar when the awful seal of Solomon was broken. In such a mood Faust received a visit from Mephistopheles, and at this moment, at his elbow, a servant was presenting a card.

"Mr. John F'olinsbee," read Peter aloud.

"A gentleman and four ladies," explained the servant.

Peter's mental processes were slowly evolving something.

"Strangers," suggested the maiden; "I think Americans."

The magical note of nationality sent the good-hearted Peter into his drawing-room, pleased, yet embarrassed as a schoolgirl.

Certainly no weakness of this kind was visible in his guests. Three of them, young ladies, were scattered about the room; one at the piano, one at the centre table, looking over a book of photographs, and another beside the *jardinière*, from which she had already extracted the rosebud suited to her complexion. On the sofa another, and possibly the elder, if a certain air of lassitude and *ennui* were a criterion of age, had gracefully composed herself. All were pretty, all were graceful, all were exceedingly well-dressed, and all were, to Peter's half-pleasure, half-embarrassment, very much at home!

They acknowledged his smile of welcome by an inquiring glance towards a gentleman who at that moment was engaged in examining a barometer at the window. He disengaged himself from his meteorological inquest, came forward with easy good-humour, and held out his hand. He was a tall, well-formed man, of Peter's own age, but looked, like the rest of his party, as if he were a thousand years younger.

"Peter Schroeder, I reckon?"

Peter's face beamed with delight as he shook the outstretched hand warmly.

"*Ja!* dot's schoost it—Peter Schroeder."

"You don't remember *me*?" continued the stranger, with a slight smile. "I never saw you but once, and that was at Spanish Gulch, the day you made that strike! I came over from Dry Creek with the boys, and went up to your cabin. How are you, old man? You're looking as if your grub agreed with you."

Peter, still shaking his hand, said, in his half-forgotten English, that he knew him "from de voorst!"

"When I left California, a month ago, I promised the boys I'd hunt you up," continued the stranger. "I stopped at Cologne yesterday. Heard you were here. Came up on a sort of *pasear* with the ladies. Let me introduce them. Rosey Tibbets, Grace Tibbets, Minnie Tibbets, Mrs. Johnson."

Peter, always a bashful man, under this presentation of bright eyes and Parisian toilettes could only stammer out his regrets that the Frau Schroeder was that day absent—visiting a soul-friend—and was not there to welcome them.

Mrs. Johnson, looking up from the sofa, would have *so* liked to see her; Miss Rosey, looking up from the photograph-book, would have *so* liked to see her; Miss Grace, at the piano, and Miss Minnie, with the delicate petals of a rose against her pink nostrils, would have both *so* liked to see her. Indeed, the only one present who might not have participated in this chorus was poor Peter himself, who, despite his previous polite assurance, felt a vague relief at his wife's absence. Conscious of this weakness, he insisted the more upon plying them with various refreshments, and "showing them the house."

Several American improvements which he had introduced, to the wonder and distrust of his neighbours, failed, however, to impress his visitors. The ladies regarded them languidly: "You've got the old-fashioned kind. We use only the self-acting patent now," they said. "You're behind the age, old man," was Folinsbee's less courteous comment. Peter, a trifle mortified, nevertheless kept up his unfailing good-humour, and finally stopped before the door of a small chamber with a confident air. "I shows you somedings now dot you can't imbrove on—ha! Somedings vot you and us fellus knows. Dot is mine own brivate abartment. Vot for Americans is dot?"

As he spoke he flung open the door, and disclosed a small room, with an American flag festooned over the window. On one side of the wall hung a portrait of Abraham Lincoln; on the other, the blue cap and blouse of a sergeant in the American army.

Peter paused to permit the patriotic feelings of his visitors their fullest vent. To his surprise, only a dead silence followed this national exhibition. Peter, doubtful of their eyesight, drew aside the window-curtains, and ostentatiously wiped the portrait of the martyred President.

"Dot is Lincoln."

"Chromo?" asked Folinsbee.

"I don't know," replied Peter, a little crestfallen.

"The engravings don't make him quite so ugly," said Mrs. Johnson, "although he was an ugly man."

"Awful," said Miss Rosey.

Peter smiled meekly. "He wasn't bretty as a womans," he said, with an embarrassed attempt at gallantry, followed by an apoplectic blush.

"What's that?" asked Folinsbee, indicating the cap and blouse with his cane. "Some of your mining duds from Spanish Gulch?"

"Dot?" gasped Peter. "Dot is mine uniforms!"

Folinsbee laughed. "I thought it might be some of that damaged clothing condemned by the War Department, and sold at auction there. The boys bought up a lot of it cheap to knock around in the tunnels with. Yes, I remember now. The fellers had a mighty good joke on your goin' into the War when you hadn't any call to go."

"Which side were you on, Mr. Schroeder?" asked Mrs. Johnson, with a polite affectation of interest.

"Which side?" echoed Peter, in vague astonishment. "I fights mit de Union."

"I had an uncle in the Federal army, and two

cousins in the Confederate service," observed Miss Minnie, languidly.

"Dey was good fellers on the oder side too," hastily interpolated the kind-hearted Peter.

"They came home awfully sick of it—*all* of 'em," continued Miss Minnie. "I'm sure *it* was dreadfully horrid."

"Awful," said Rosey.

Meanwhile they had backed out of the room listlessly, and were clearly indicating that they were awaiting Peter's further movements. He closed the door with an embarrassing laugh that was half a sigh, and led the way back to the drawing-room. On the way Miss Rosey stopped to admire the photograph of a stout, good-humoured gentleman in a gorgeous hussar uniform. o

"Who is this?"

"Dot is me—myself," said Peter—"wen I was in de war mit France," he added, apologetically. To his surprise, the ladies gathered before it with an appearance of interest; and Mrs. Johnson remarked archly that the uniform was very becoming.

"Why didn't you show the girls that *first*?" asked Folinsbee, taking Peter aside. "Why did you trot out those old army rags of yours? Don't you know they're just crazy after these foreign uniforms? Think there's a count or baron inside of 'em always. By the way," he asked suddenly, "you ain't anything o' that sort now, are you?"

Peter shook his head blankly, but found himself blushing as he thought of his wife's uniformed relations.

"Didn't get anything of that kind for your services?" continued Folinsbee. "Nary ribbon—medals—eh?"

"I get de 'Iron Cross,'" said Peter, mildly.

"Humph! Iron Cross! Couldn't afford a gold

one, eh? Not much of that lying round loose here in these parts?"

Too modest to explain further, too delicate to expose what he conceived to be the natural ignorance of his foreign visitor, but utterly oblivious of the mischief in that foreign visitor's eye, Peter endeavoured to turn the subject by asking him to bring the ladies to dine with him the next day.

"I reckon not, old man," said Folinsbee. "I'll be on my way to Berlin to-morrow, and I reckon the girls are headin' up the Rhine to tackle some of them ruined castles. But you might ask 'em, just for a flyer."

"Don't you all go mit yourselves together?" queried the astonished Peter.

Folinsbee smiled. "Not much, I reckon. We only met at Brussels, and we happened to travel in the same *coupé* to Cologne. We sorter passed the time o' day, swapped lies, and made ourselves sociable. I told 'em at Cologne I reckoned to run up yer to see you, and asked 'em to come along. It was a little *pasear*—that's all. They're all right, old man," he added, laughing at Peter's puzzled face—"one of 'em a senator's daughter, I reckon. If they ain't right, I'm responsible."

Peter laughed and blushed. Not that he saw anything in this escapade but an instance of that republican simplicity and social freedom which he admired in theory; but he was conscious that his new life had brought with it responsibilities to other customs. He was vaguely relieved that his wife was not present to hear Folinsbee's explanation, and, later, that the ladies politely declined his invitation.

Nevertheless, he parted with them reluctantly. When the smart landau drove up to his door, and they took their places, serene and self-possessed, under the wondering and critical fire of his neighbours'

Spions, they seemed such a vision of happy, confident, graceful, beautiful, and fitly adorned youth, that, as he re-entered his house, he felt he had grown a hundred years older, and even his familiar surroundings appeared to belong to another epoch and planet. He mounted slowly to the little room which contained his treasures. He looked at them again carefully; inspected the grave melancholy of Lincoln's face, and lifted the blue blouse from its nail. Were those features "ugly"? was that blouse a "rag"? Peter pondered long and perplexedly. Gradually an explanation slowly evolved itself from its profundity. He placed his finger beside his nose, and a look of deep cunning shone in his eyes. "Dot's it," he said to himself triumphantly, "dot's shoost it! *Der Rebooplicans dog't got no memories. Ve don't got nodings else.*"

He did not, however, confide to his wife the full details of this visit. But one day, when she had returned from visiting a remote cousin at Kissingen, she asked him why he had never told her that Mrs. Johnson had called. The guilty blood flew to Peter's face, and he stammered out some half-intelligible excuse. To his infinite relief and astonishment, however, Frau Schroeder, far from noticing his confusion, spoke volubly of having met Mrs. Johnson at Kissingen, and dwelt at some length on the gentlemanly graces and breeding of Mr. Johnson. "*He* did not call with her, then?" asked Mrs. Schroeder. Peter, stammering and untruthful, really could not remember. There were half a dozen people, and they did not stop long. "I forget if she said that her husband knew you," continued Frau Schroeder; "but you would remember him, of course. He's not like the Americans, you know—but like a—a gentleman and—an—officer." Peter, not daring to allude to the informal character of

Mrs. Johnson's escort, said nothing. "They are coming here next week," added Frau Schroeder; "I have invited them." As Peter seldom had a voice in the nomination of his visitors, he meekly acquiesced. "But vot gets me," he communed with himself, "how dot bretty Mrs. Johnson, mit no cards, gets mine wife."

The next week brought Mrs. Johnson, who languidly remembered Peter, and at once made herself as much at home with Peter's wife as she had with him. It brought also Mr. Johnson—a small, quiet, plain man.

"You would hardly remember me as a Californian, Mr. Schroeder?" he said, extending his hand.

Peter would hardly have recognized him even as an American. Certainly no one could be further from the type most familiar to Peter. He was unlike Folinsbee—unlike any of his old army comrades—unlike any other American he had known, and yet as certainly unlike any European with whom Peter was familiar. He was as confident and self-possessed as Folinsbee, and yet without Folinsbee's humorous familiarity; he was modest and unassuming, and yet Peter felt that he took possession of him as securely as Folinsbee had. He was inclined to resent this at first—inclined to watch Mr. Johnson's mouth—a peculiar mouth, with a latent apologetical smile—a smile as if humanity on all occasions presented a humorous aspect to him (Johnson) which nothing but his (Johnson's) thoughtful commiseration for humanity kept him from publicly noticing.

"Yet," continued Johnson, regarding Peter as a wayward, mirth-provoking child, "yet I have lived in California many years. I remember to have heard of you there; of your good fortune, of your subsequent career in the army, and of your return

here. I have known many of your friends. Indeed, I feel as if we were old acquaintances."

That was what he *said*. His smiling commentary seemed to Peter to add as plainly, "And there are humorous depths in your career and character, Peter, which nobody knows better than myself; but we won't say anything about that, Peter—not a word."

Considerably embarrassed, Peter asked him a few questions. But he was annoyed at the extent and variety of Mr. Johnson's knowledge of his affairs. Scarcely a person Peter had known—scarcely an incident in Peter's experience—but were as equally and humorously recognized by Mr. Johnson. Peter's first partner in the mines, the bugler in his regiment, his fellow-passenger and room-mate in the steamer, his banker and friend in Cologne, even his wife's relations—yea, actually, a certain awe-inspiring General and forty-first cousin of Frau Schroeder's at Coblenz, were all familiar to Johnson. And all and each were, on the authority of his peculiar smile, more or less ridiculous, if he chose to say so. But he wouldn't.

Perhaps it was this appearance of restrained power, combined with great gentleness of manner, which made him so popular with the women, and particularly with Frau Schroeder. No American had before touched that formal, well-regulated woman's heart. Peter was astounded at the influence this stranger had gained in the Von Hummel family. Had he not intimated, by his peculiar smile, that he was sure that the Herr General Von Hummel drank too much, and that the family were more than once scandalized by his too susceptible weaknesses for the fair sex? Had he not suggested in the same way that the learned Herr Professor's last book on Ethnology was ridiculous—as, indeed, some

critics had already said—but insinuated that he was even capable of greater folly? Honest Peter could not understand it. Folinsbee, with his blunt familiarity and frivolity, would have been coldly repulsed by Frau Schroeder. Peter even now shuddered as he recalled the blank and even resentful amazement with which she had received the characteristic humour of an American tourist to whom he had once, in their earlier married life, rashly introduced her. Who was this Mr. T. Barker Johnson? Even the usual local caution regarding a stranger's social and financial standing was withheld. Frau Schroeder spoke of him as a Californian capitalist. His banker—Peter's banker too—knew him as a man of ample remittances. That was all.

For two weeks the stranger had held undoubted sway at the Schroeders'. Dinners and suppers had been given in his honour. General Von Hummel had sat late with him at table; the Herr Professor had presented him with his last volume and disclosed his future literary intentions. Even Peter was conscious of being lifted into importance in his own family by his former residence in the country of this popular stranger and his familiarity with Americans. Little as he knew of the type represented by Johnson, he was compelled in sheer self-defence to assume a thorough knowledge of it; and I fear the poor fellow went even so far—when the praises of Johnson were being hymned in his ears—as to invent florid reminiscences of other Johnsons more extraordinary than this. "*Wunderschön!*" gasped the apoplectic General. "Man knows when man in that wonderful country has been," said Peter, shaking his head sententiously. The Frau Schroeder did not endorse this sentiment. "There are Americans—and Americans!" she said, significantly; and Peter was fain to retire to his little room, and, in company

with his pipe, contemplate the portrait of Lincoln and the faded trappings of his old military service.

He was sitting thus one evening, when there came a tap at his door. It opened to Johnson—quiet, gentlemanly, and humorously sympathetic. Peter was a little embarrassed. Since the exhibition of his treasures to the Folinsbee party he had grown doubtful of their effect upon strangers, and had said nothing of them to Johnson. But that gentleman smiled on Lincoln's picture as on a brother humourist, and looked at Peter's blouse and cap with an evident instinctive foreknowledge of all that was laughable in his history.

"You knew dot Lincoln?" queried Peter timidly, pointing with his pipe at the picture.

Johnson smiled. It presently appeared that he not only knew all that contemporary history knew of the martyred President, but many facts yet unrecorded. To Mr. Lincoln's humour—as interpreted by Peter in one or two well-worn anecdotes—Mr. Johnson accorded the recognition of a thoughtful smile, while in Peter's clothes he detected evidently some kindred and latent folly. Emboldened by his sympathy, Peter confided to him the history of his life, his aims, his political theories and dreams, and even his recent disappointment at the conduct of Folinsbee and his friends. "Yes," said Peter, "he called mine uniform 'rags'—dot was not an oopside ding to say, Mr. Johnson, and I says mit mineself, 'Der Rebooplicans don't got no memories'—eh?"

Mr. Johnson smiled assentingly, patiently, expectantly—quite as if he were previously aware of all Peter had told him—but was too polite to interrupt him. Then, laying his hand on Peter's shoulder, he said softly, "You're too good a Republican, Peter, to brood over mere sentimental memories. Now,

look here. I like you, and I want to be frank with you. I know you, and you're not properly appreciated here—even by your own family. It is time, Peter, you should assert yourself. It is time they should know what you are. You are the stuff from which Liberators and Deliverers are made. I saw it when I first saw you—long before you ever knew me."

The most modest and unassuming man has somewhere within him the germ of self-conscious merit, which needs only the sunshine of praise to bud and blossom into life. Poor Peter had never known praise before—perhaps he had never missed it—but, tasting the strange fruit, he found it good, and that, like other forbidden fruit, it made him a god like others, and, with his face glowing with pleasure, he seized and shook Johnson's hand warmly. He was still too unsophisticated to disguise his feelings. Perhaps, having already suffered from modesty, he did not care to simulate it.

"It rests with *you*, Peter, to make yourself what you should be—what you *can* be," continued Johnson. "What if I told you of another country, Peter—newer and fresher than the one you once adopted; where the soil is virgin and the people are plastic;—a country to be moulded and fashioned into shape by men like you—a country with no predilections, few traditions, and *no* history—a republic wanting only ideas, and capital—a country that you might become president of—as *I am*?"

Peter, whose eyes had been growing wider and wider, shut them at this climax from sheer inability to face the astounding revelation. There was a dead silence. The voice of Mrs. Johnson at the piano came melodiously from the drawing-room; the voice of Mrs. Schroeder, inquiring for her missing lord, came potentially from the hall below; but Peter

heeded them not. Johnson smiled, closed the door, and, drawing a chair beside Peter, in a confidential whisper quietly took absorbing possession of his faculties for two mortal hours.

* * * * *

I had arrived at Calais from Brussels near midnight—an hour too early for the tidal boat, and in advance of the train from Paris. There was scarcely time to seek an hotel—too much time to wait at the station, and the keeper of the “busket” had informed me that his “establishment” could not be open for the receipt of custom until the arrival of the Paris train. Noticing a light in a cosy sitting-room adjoining, I made bold, in spite of his protestations, to enter, and was confronted by Jack Folinsbee, much to our mutual astonishment.

His greeting was hearty. “Come in. Don’t mind that ‘bar-keep.’ I’m running this yer concern until the train comes in. He tried to turn me off at first, too. But I asked him what he reckoned the rent of this old shebang would be for two hours. He tore round and thought I was crazy, I s’pose, until he saw I meant business, and he fixed his price. I paid him and took possession. Now, what’ll you take, old boy? Name your pizen. This is my treat. And I didn’t think when I left Californy that I’d be running a railroad restaurant in France.”

It was true: he had, after his Californian fashion, gratified his present whim at a pretty price. The landlord, looking upon him as a spendthrift savage, was, I think, a little relieved when my appearance took some of the responsibility off his hands. By the light of the blazing fire, in a comfortable arm-chair, I did not propose to question the propriety of his impulses.

Our talk naturally fell upon old days and old friends. “You remember ‘Dutch Pete,’ don’t you?”

asked Folinsbee. I *did* remember Peter Schroeder. "You know," continued Jack, "how he took the money he made in that big strike, and, instead of getting away with it, goes off in a wild-goose chase to fight in the War?"

"Yes."

"Well, he had fool's luck then. Got off without a scratch; went back to Germany a rich man, married and settled down, and might have been all right now. But this yer last foolishness of his has fixed him—sent him up the flume—sure!"

I begged Folinsbee to explain.

"Well, I reckon perhaps I'm a little to blame for it too. You remember Johnson—T. Barker Johnson—that old filibuster?"

"Yes."

"He failed, don't yer know, with Walker in Nicaragua, but came mighty near fixing things his own way in Costa Rica. Yes, sir," continued Jack, becoming excited, "it *was* a big thing he did down there. All alone, too. Got a canoe, by gum! and pulled out to a ship's yawl, and sorter revolutionizes the yawl's crew; then he takes that crew to the ship and raises a mutiny in the ship, takes command of the ship, and calls himself Admiral of the Ometepe Navy, and summons a fort to surrender! And it surrenders—blank it all!—the whole garrison and the Ometepe army surrenders. And he was such a quiet man—such a very quiet man! You remember him, Major, don't you?—such a quiet man—just the faintest little snicker round his mouth, but allus so quiet—just a lamb."

I ventured to remind Jack that we were talking of Peter Schroeder.

"That's so. Well, Johnson got hisself made President or Dictator of the Ometepe Confederacy—or at least one wing of it—and came over here *incog.*, to

negotiate bonds and get money. Well, it was jest my luck about that time to meet Mrs. Johnson and a party of nice girls, travelling, and I took 'em to see Peter just for a *pasear*. Peter was just about as big a fool as ever, and showed us his army duds, and spouted patriotic hog-wash; and I reckon Mrs. Johnson sorter took Peter's measure then and thar. But she says nothing, and it comes about in some way that she meets Mrs. Peter, who, I reckon, manages Peter and keeps him in bounds, and she captures her, and Johnson captures Peter, and the game is made. For in less than ten months—by gosh!—the Johnsons have got Peter made over, capital and all, to the Ometepe Confederacy. And, as if that wasn't enough, d—n me! if they didn't rope in the whole Schroeder family generally—old Frau Schroeder, aunts, uncles, cousins, and all. By Jingo! there was a whole German colony started out to Ometepe to settle, and Peter was made Secretary of the Treasury!"

"And then——"

Folinsbee looked at me in contemptuous surprise. "And then? Why, of course, the whole thing goes up. It might have been a month—I reckon it wasn't more than three weeks—that they had a stable Government in Ometepe. But it busted at the end of that time—busted clean?"

"And Peter?"

"That's just it! You see, all the Germans ske-daddled except Peter. Even Johnson, I reckon, got clean away. But Peter—and that's where his God-forsaken foolishness comes in—hangs round and gets captured. At least, you don't hear any more about *him*."

* * * * *

Folinsbee was wrong. More was heard of Peter Schroeder. For, when captured and led out to be shot as an insurgent, one of his comrades made an

attempt to save him, on the plea of his being an innocent German emigrant. The General was inexorable; the firing party was waiting, but Peter's friend still pleaded.

"Let him step to the front!"

Peter stepped calmly before the loaded muskets. But his friend saw in dismay that he had changed his clothes, and wore his faded blouse and blue army cap of an American sergeant.

"Prisoner, to what nation do you claim to belong?"

Peter's blue eyes kindled. "Dot's it! I claim to be an American citi——"

The officer's sword waved, there was a crackle of musketry and the rising of a pale-blue smoke. And on its wings the soul of Peter Schroeder went in quest of his ideal Republic.

THE TWINS OF TABLE MOUNTAIN.

THEY lived on the verge of a vast stony level, upheaved so far above the surrounding country that its vague outlines, viewed from the nearest valley, seemed a mere cloud-streak resting upon the lesser hills. The rush and roar of the turbulent river that washed its eastern base were lost at that height; the winds that strove with the giant pines that half-way climbed its flanks spent their fury below the summit. For, at variance with most meteorological speculation, an eternal calm seemed to invest this serene altitude. A few Alpine flowers seldom thrilled their petals to a passing breeze; rain and snow fell alike perpendicularly, heavily, and monotonously over the granite boulders scattered along its brown expanse. Although by actual measurement an inconsiderable elevation of the Sierran range, and a mere shoulder of the nearest white-faced peak that glimmered in the west, it seemed to lie so near the quiet, passionless stars that at night it caught something of their calm remoteness. The articulate utterance of such a locality should have been a whisper; a laugh or exclamation was discordant, and the ordinary tones of the human voice on the night of the 15th of May, 1868, had a grotesque incongruity.

In the thick darkness that clothed the mountain that night, the human figure would have been lost or confounded with the outlines of outlying boulders, which at such times took upon themselves the vague semblance of men and animals. Hence the voices in the following colloquy seemed the more grotesque and incongruous from being the apparent expression of an upright monolith, ten feet high, on the right, and another mass of granite that, reclining, peeped over the verge.

"Hello!"

"Hello yourself!"

"You're late."

"I lost the trail, and climbed up the slide."

Here followed a stumble, the clatter of stones down the mountain side, and an oath, so very human and undignified that it at once relieved the boulders of any complicity of expression. The voices, too, were close together now, and unexpectedly in quite another locality.

"Anything up?"

"Loosey Napoleon's declared war agin Germany!"

"Sho-o-o!"

Notwithstanding this exclamation, the interest of the latter speaker was evidently only polite and perfunctory. What, indeed, were the political convulsions of the Old World to the dwellers in this serene, isolated eminence of the New?

"I reckon it's so," continued the first voice; "French Pete and that thar feller that keeps the Dutch grocery hev hed a row over it. Emptied their six-shooters into each other. The Dutchman's got two balls in his leg, and the Frenchman's got an onnessary button-hole in his shirt buzzum, and hez caved in."

This concise, local corroboration of the conflict of remote nations, however confirmatory, did not

appear to excite any further interest. Even the last speaker, now that he was in this calm, dispassionate atmosphere, seemed to lose his own concern in his tidings, and to have abandoned everything of a sensational and lower-worldly character in the pines below. There was a few moments of absolute silence, and then another stumble. But now the voices of both speakers were quite patient and philosophical.

"Hold on, and I'll strike a light," said the second speaker. "I brought a lantern along, but I didn't light up. I kem out afore sundown, and you know how it allers is up yer. I didn't want it, and didn't keer to light up. I forgot you're always a little dazed and strange-like when you first come up."

There was a crackle, a flash, and presently a steady glow which the surrounding darkness seemed to resent. The faces of the two men thus revealed were singularly alike. The same thin, narrow outline of jaw and temple; the same dark, grave eyes; the same brown growth of curly beard and moustache, which concealed the mouth, and hid what might have been any individual idiosyncrasy of thought or expression, showed them to be brothers, or better known as the "Twins of Table Mountain." A certain animation in the face of the second speaker—the first comer,—a certain light in his eye, might have at first distinguished him; but even this faded out in the steady glow of the lantern, and had no value as a permanent distinction, for by the time they had reached the western verge of the mountain, the two faces had settled into a homogeneous calmness and melancholy.

The vague horizon of darkness that, a few feet from the lantern, still encompassed them, gave no indication of their progress until their feet actually trod the rude planks and thatch that formed the

roof of their habitation. For their cabin half burrowed in the mountain, and half clung, like a swallow's nest, to the side of the deep declivity that terminated the northern limit of the summit. Had it not been for the windlass of a shaft, a coil of rope, and a few heaps of stone and gravel, which were the only indications of human labour in that stony field, there was nothing to interrupt its monotonous dead level. And when they descended a dozen well-worn steps to the door of their cabin, they left the summit as before, lonely, silent, motionless, uninterrupted, basking in the cold light of the stars.

The simile of a "nest," as applied to the cabin of the brothers, was no mere figure of speech, as the light of the lantern first flashed upon it. The narrow ledge before the door was strewn with feathers. A suggestion that it might be the home and haunt of predatory birds was promptly checked by the spectacle of the nailed-up carcasses of a dozen hawks against the walls, and the outspread wings of an extended eagle emblazoning the gable above the door, like an armorial bearing. Within the cabin the walls and chimney-piece were dazingly bedecked with the parti-coloured wings of jays, yellow-birds, woodpeckers, kingfishers, and the poly-tinted wood-duck. Yet in that dry, highly rarefied atmosphere there was not the slightest suggestion of odour or decay.

The first speaker hung the lantern upon a hook that dangled from the rafters, and going to the broad chimney, kicked the half-dead members into a sudden resentful blaze. He then opened a rude cupboard, and without looking around, called "Ruth!"

The second speaker turned his head from the open doorway where he was leaning, as if listening

to something in the darkness, and answered abstractedly—

"Rand!"

"I don't believe you have touched grub to-day!"

Ruth grunted out some indifferent reply.

"Thar hezent been a slice cut off that bacon since I left," continued Rand, bringing a side of bacon and some biscuits from the cupboard and applying himself to the discussion of them at the table. "You're gettin' off yer feed, Ruth. What's up?"

Ruth replied by taking an uninvited seat beside him, and resting his chin on the palms of his hands. He did not eat, but simply transferred his inattention from the door to the table.

"You're workin' too many hours in the shaft," continued Rand. "You're always up to some such d—n fool business when I'm not yer."

"I dipped a little west to-day," Ruth went on, without heeding the brotherly remonstrance, "and struck quartz and pyrites."

"Thet's you!—allers dippin' west or east for quartz and the colour, instead of keeping on plumb down to the 'cement!'"*

"We've been three years digging for cement," said Ruth, more in abstraction than reproach; "three years!"

"And we may be three years more—may be only three days. Why, you couldn't be more impatient if—if—if you lived in a valley."

Delivering this tremendous comparison as an unanswerable climax, Rand applied himself once more to his repast. Ruth, after a moment's pause, without speaking or looking up, disengaged his hand from under his chin and slid it along, palm uppermost, on the table beside his brother. There-

* The local name for gold-bearing alluvial drift—the bed of a pre-historic river.

upon Rand slowly reached forward his left hand, the right being engaged in conveying victual to his mouth, and laid it on his brother's palm. The act was evidently an habitual, half-mechanical one, for in a few moments the hands were as gently disengaged, without comment or expression. At last Rand leaned back in his chair, laid down his knife and fork, and complacently loosening the belt that held his revolver, threw it and the weapon on his bed. Taking out his pipe, and chipping some tobacco on the table, he said, carelessly, "I came a piece through the woods with Mornie just now." The face that Ruth turned upon his brother was very distinct in its expression at that moment, and quite belied the popular theory that the twins could not be told apart. "Thet gal," continued Rand, without looking up, "is either flighty, or—or suthin'," he added, in vague disgust, pushing the table from him as if it were the lady in question. "Don't tell me!"

Ruth's eyes quickly sought his brother's, and were as quickly averted, as he asked hurriedly, "How?"

"What gets me," continued Rand in a petulant *non sequitur*, "is that *you*, my own twin brother, never lets on about her comin' yer, permiskus like, when I ain't yer, and you and her gallivantin' and promanadin', and swoppin' sentiments and mottoes."

Ruth tried to contradict his blushing face with a laugh of worldly indifference.

"She came up yer on a sort of *pasear*——"

"Oh yes!—a short cut to the creek," interpolated Rand, satirically.

"Last Tuesday or Wednesday," continued Ruth, with affected forgetfulness.

"Oh, in course, Tuesday or Wednesday, or Thursday! You've so many folks climbing up this yer

mountain to call on ye," continued the ironical Rand, "that you disremember; only you remembered enough not to tell me. *She* did! She took me for you, or pretended to."

The colour dropped from Ruth's cheek.

"Took you for me?" he asked, with an awkward laugh.

"Yes," sneered Rand; "clirped and chattered away about *our* picnic, *our* nosegays, and lord knows what! Said she'd keep them blue jay's wings, and wear 'em in her hat. Spouted poetry, too; the same sort o' rot you get off now and then."

Ruth laughed again, but rather ostentatiously and nervously.

"Ruth, look yer!"

Ruth faced his brother.

"What's your little game? Do you mean to say you don't know what thet gal is? Do you mean to say you don't know that she's the laughing-stock of the Ferry; thet her father's a d—d old fool, and her mother's a drunkard, and worse—thet she's got any right to be hanging round yer? You can't mean to marry her, even if you kalkilate to turn me out to do it, for she wouldn't live alone with ye up here. 'Tain't her kind. And if I thought you was thinking of——"

"What?" said Ruth, turning upon his brother quickly.

"Oh, thet's right! Holler! Swear and yell, and break things, do! Tear round," continued Rand, kicking his boots off in a corner, "just because I ask you a civil question. That's brotherly," he added, jerking his chair away against the side of the cabin, "ain't it?"

"She's not to blame because her mother drinks, and her father's a shyster," said Ruth, earnestly and strongly. "The men who make her the laughing-

stock of the Ferry tried to make her something worse, and failed, and take this sneak's revenge on her. 'Laughing-stock!' Yes, they knew she could turn the tables on them."

"Of course; go on! She's better than me; I know I'm a fratricide, that's what I am," said Rand, throwing himself on the upper of the two berths that formed the bedstead of the cabin.

"I've seen her three times," continued Ruth.

"And you've known me twenty years," interrupted his brother.

Ruth turned on his heel, and walked towards the door.

"That's right; go on! Why don't you get the chalk?"

Ruth made no reply. Rand descended from the bed, and taking a piece of chalk from the shelf, drew a line on the floor, dividing the cabin in two equal parts.

"You can have the east half," he said, as he climbed slowly back into bed.

This mysterious rite was the usual termination of a quarrel between the twins. Each man kept his half of the cabin until the feud was forgotten. It was the mark of silence and separation, over which no words of recrimination, argument, or even explanation were delivered until it was effaced by one or the other. This was considered equivalent to apology or reconciliation, which each were equally bound in honour to accept.

It may be remarked that the floor was much whiter at this line of demarcation, and under the fresh chalk line appeared the faint evidences of one recently effaced.

Without apparently heeding this potential ceremony, Ruth remained leaning against the doorway, looking upon the night, the bulk of whose pro-

fundity and blackness seemed to be gathered below him. The vault above was serene and tranquil, with a few large far-spread stars; the abyss beneath, untroubled by sight or sound. Stepping out upon the ledge, he leaned far over the shelf that sustained their cabin, and listened. A faint rhythmical roll, rising and falling in long undulations against the invisible horizon, to his accustomed ears told him the wind was blowing among the pines in the valley. Yet, mingling with this familiar sound, his ear, now morbidly acute, seemed to detect a stranger inarticulate murmur, as of confused and excited voices, swelling up from the mysterious depths to the stars above, and again swallowed up in the gulfs of silence below. He was roused from a consideration of this phenomena by a faint glow towards the east, which at last brightened, until the dark outline of the distant walls of the valley stood out against the sky. Were his other senses participating in the delusion of his ears? For with the brightening light came the faint odour of burning timber.

His face grew anxious as he gazed. At last he rose and re-entered the cabin. His eyes fell upon the faint chalk mark, and taking his soft felt hat from his head, with a few practical sweeps of the brim, he brushed away the ominous record of their late estrangement. Going to the bed, whereon Rand lay stretched, open-eyed, he would have laid his hand upon his arm lightly, but the brother's fingers sought and clasped his own. "Get up," he said quietly; "there's a strange fire in the Cañon head that I can't make out."

Rand slowly clambered from his shelf, and, hand in hand, the brothers stood upon the ledge. "It's a right smart chance beyond the Ferry, and a piece beyond the Mill too," said Rand, shading his eyes

with his hand from force of habit. "It's in the woods where——" He would have added where he met Mornie, but it was a point of honour with the twins, after reconciliation, not to allude to any topic of their recent disagreement.

Ruth dropped his brother's hand. "It doesn't smell like the woods," he said slowly.

"Smell!" repeated Rand incredulously. "Why, it's twenty miles in a bee-line yonder. Smell, indeed!"

Ruth was silent, but presently fell to listening again with his former abstraction. "You don't hear anything—do you?" he asked, after a pause.

"It's blowin' in the pines on the river," said Rand shortly.

"You don't hear anything else?"

"No."

"Nothing like—like—like——"

Rand, who had been listening with an intensity that distorted the left side of his face, interrupted him impatiently.

"Like what?"

"Like a woman sobbin'?"

"Ruth," said Rand, suddenly looking up in his brother's face, "what's gone of you?"

Ruth laughed. "The fire's out," he said, abruptly re-entering the cabin. "I'm goin' to turn in."

Rand, following his brother half reproachfully, saw him divest himself of his clothing and roll himself in the blankets of his bed.

"Good night, Randy."

Rand hesitated. He would have liked to ask his brother another question; but there was clearly nothing to be done but follow his example.

"Good night, Ruthy," he said, and put out the light. As he did so the glow in the eastern horizon faded too, and darkness seemed to well up from the

depths below and, flowing in the open door, wrapped them in deeper slumber.

Twelve months had elapsed since the quarrel and reconciliation, during which interval no reference was made by either of the brothers to the cause which had provoked it. Rand was at work in the shaft, Ruth having that morning undertaken the replenishment of the larder with game from the wooded skirt of the mountain. Rand had taken advantage of his brother's absence to "prospect" in the "drift"—a proceeding utterly at variance with his previous condemnation of all such speculative essay; but Rand, despite his assumption of a superior practical nature, was not above certain local superstitions. Having that morning put on his grey flannel shirt wrong side out, an abstraction recognized among the miners as the sure forerunner of divination and treasure discovery, he could not forego that opportunity of trying his luck without hazarding a dangerous example. He was also conscious of feeling "chipper," another local expression for buoyancy of spirit, not common to men who work fifty feet below the surface, without the stimulus of air and sunshine, and not to be overlooked as an important factor in fortunate adventure. Nevertheless, noon came without the discovery of any treasure; he had attacked the walls on either side of the lateral "drift," skilfully, so as to expose their quality, without destroying their cohesive integrity, but had found nothing. Once or twice, returning to the shaft for rest and air, its grim silence had seemed to him pervaded with some vague echo of cheerful holiday voices above. This set him to thinking of his brother's equally extravagant fancy of the wailing voices in the air on the night of the fire, and of his attributing it to a lover's abstraction.

"I laid it to his being struck after that gal, and yet," Rand continued to himself, "here's me, who haven't been foolin' round no gal, and dog my skin if I didn't think I heard one singin' up thar!" He put his foot on the lower round of the ladder, paused, and slowly ascended a dozen steps. Here he paused again. All at once the whole shaft was filled with the musical vibrations of a woman's song. Seizing the rope that hung idly from the windlass, he half climbed, half swung himself to the surface.

The voice was there, but the sudden transition to the dazzling level before him at first blinded his eyes; so that he took in, only by degrees, the unwonted spectacle of the singer—a pretty girl standing on tiptoe on a boulder, not a dozen yards from him, utterly absorbed in tying a gaily striped neckerchief, evidently taken from her own plump throat, to the halliards of a freshly cut hickory pole, newly reared as a flagstaff beside her. The hickory pole, the halliards, the fluttering scarf, the young lady herself, were all glaring innovations on the familiar landscape; but Rand, with his hand still on the rope, silently and demurely enjoyed it.

For the better understanding of the general reader, who does not live on an isolated mountain, it may be observed that the young lady's position on the rock exhibited some study of *pose*, and a certain exaggeration of attitude that betrayed the habit of an audience; also that her voice had an artificial accent that was not wholly unconscious even in this lofty solitude. Yet the very next moment, when she turned and caught Rand's eye fixed upon her, she started naturally, coloured slightly, uttered that feminine adjuration, "Good Lord! gracious! goodness me!" which is seldom used in reference to its effect upon the hearer, and

skipped instantly from the boulder to the ground. Here, however, she alighted in a *pose*—brought the right heel of her neatly fitting left boot closely into the hollowed side of her right instep; at the same moment deftly caught her flying skirt, whipped it around her ankles, and slightly raising it behind, permitted the chaste display of an inch or two of frilled white petticoat. The most irreverent critic of the sex will, I think, admit that it has some movements that are automatic.

"Hope I didn't disturb ye," said Rand, pointing to the flagstaff.

The young lady slightly turned her head. she said, "but I didn't know anybody was here in the course. Our *party*"—she emphasized the word, accompanied it with a look toward the distant extremity of the plateau, to show she was not mistaken—"our party climbed this ridge, and put up this pole as a sign that they did it." The ridiculous self-complacency of this record in the face of a man who was evidently a dweller on the mountain, apparently struck her for the first time. "We didn't know," she stammered, looking at the shaft from which Rand had emerged, "that—that——" She stopped, and, glancing again towards the distant range where her friends had disappeared, began to edge away.

"They can't be far off," interposed Rand quietly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for the lady to be there; "Table Mountain ain't as big as all that. Don't you be scared! So you thought nobody lived up here?"

She turned upon him a pair of honest hazel eyes, which not only contradicted the somewhat meretricious smartness of her dress, but was utterly inconsistent with the palpable artificial colour of her hair—an obvious imitation of a certain popular fashion then known in artistic circles as the "British

Blonde,"—and began to ostentatiously resume a pair of lemon-coloured kid gloves. Having, as it were, thus indicated her standing and respectability, and put an immeasurable distance between herself and her bold interlocutor, she said impressively, "We evidently made a mistake; I will rejoin our party, who will, of course, apologize."

"What's your hurry?" said the imperturbable Rand, disengaging himself from the rope and walking towards her. "As long as you're up here, you might stop a spell."

"I have no wish to intrude—that is, our party certainly has not," continued the young lady, pulling the tight gloves, and smoothing the plump, almost bursting fingers, with an affectation of fashionable ease.

"Oh, I haven't anything to do just now," said Rand, "and it's about grub time, I reckon. Yes, I live here, Ruth and me; right here."

The young woman glanced at the shaft.

"No, not down there," said Rand, following her eye with a laugh. "Come here, and I'll show you."

A strong desire to keep up an appearance of genteel reserve, and an equally strong inclination to enjoy the adventurous company of this good-looking, hearty young fellow, made her hesitate. Perhaps she regretted having undertaken a rôle of such dignity at the beginning; she could have been so perfectly natural with this perfectly natural man, whereas any relaxation now might increase his familiarity. And yet she was not without a vague suspicion that her dignity and her gloves were alike thrown away on him—a fact made the more evident when Rand stepped to her side, and without any apparent consciousness of disrespect or gallantry, laid his large hand, half persuasively, half fra-

ternally upon her shoulder, and said, "Oh, come along, do."

The simple act either exceeded the limits of her forbearance or decided the course of her subsequent behaviour. She instantly stepped back a single pace, and drew her left foot slowly and deliberately after her. Then she fixed her eyes and uplifted eyebrows upon the daring hand, and taking it by the ends of her thumb and forefinger, lifted it and dropped it in mid-air. She then folded her arms. It was the indignant gesture with which "Alice," the Pride of Dumballin Village, received the loathsome advances of the bloated aristocrat, Sir Parkyns Parkyn, and had at Marysville, a few nights before, brought down the house.

This effect was, I think, however, lost upon Rand. The slight colour that rose to his cheek as he looked down upon his clay-soiled hands, was due to the belief that he had really contaminated her outward superfine person. But his colour quickly passed, his frank, boyish smile returned, as he said, "It'll rub off. Lord, don't mind that. Thar, now—come on!"

The young woman bit her lip. Then nature triumphed, and she laughed, although a little scornfully. And then Providence assisted her with the sudden presentation of two figures—a man and woman, slowly climbing up over the mountain verge, not far from them. With a cry of, "There's Sol, now," she forgot her dignity and her confusion, and ran towards them.

Rand stood looking after her neat figure, less concerned in the advent of the strangers than in her sudden caprice. He was not so young and inexperienced but that he noted certain ambiguities in her dress and manner; he was by no means impressed by her dignity. But he could not help watching her as she appeared to be volubly recount-

ing her late interview to her companions; and, still unconscious of any impropriety or obtrusiveness, he lounged down lazily towards her. Her humour had evidently changed, for she turned an honest pleased face upon him, as she girlishly attempted to drag the strangers forward.

The man was plump and short; unlike the natives of the locality, he was closely cropped and shaven, as if to keep down the strong blue-blackness of his beard and hair, which nevertheless asserted itself over his round cheeks and upper lip like a tattooing of Indian ink. The woman at his side was reserved and indistinctive, with that appearance of being an unenthusiastic family servant peculiar to some men's wives. When Rand was within a few feet of him, he started, struck a theatrical attitude, and shading his eyes with his hand, cried, "What, do me eyes deceive me!" burst into a hearty laugh, darted forward, seized Rand's hand and shook it briskly.

"Pinkney! Pinkney, my boy, how are you? And this is your little 'prop?' your quarter-section, your country seat, that we've been trespassing on—eh? A nice little spot—cool, sequestered, remote! A trifle unimproved: carriage road as yet unfinished—ha! ha! But to think of our making a discovery of this inaccessible mountain; climbing it, sir, for two mortal hours; christening it 'Sol's Peak'; getting up a flag-pole, unfurling our standard to the breeze, sir, and then, by Jingo, winding up by finding Pinkney—the festive Pinkney—living on it at home!"

Completely surprised, but still perfectly good-humoured, Rand shook one of the stranger's hands warmly, and received on his broad shoulders a welcoming thwack from the other, without question.

"She don't mind her friends making free with me, evidently," said Rand to himself, as he tried to

suggest that fact to the young lady in a meaning glance.

The stranger noted his glance, and suddenly passed his hand thoughtfully over his shaven checks. "No!" he said. "Yes, surely, I forget! Yes, I see; of course you don't. Rosy," turning to his wife, "of course, Pinkney doesn't know Phemie—eh!"

"No, nor *me* either, Sol," said that lady warningly.

"Certainly," continued Sol. "It's his misfortune! You weren't with me at Gold Hill. Allow me," he said, turning to Rand, "to present Mrs. Sol Saunders, wife of the undersigned, and Miss Euphemia Neville, otherwise known as the 'Marysville Pet,' the best variety-actress known on the provincial boards. Played Ophelia at Marysville, Friday; domestic drama at Gold Hill, Saturday; Sunday night, four songs in character, different dress each time, and a clog-dance. The best clog-dance on the Pacific Slope," he added, in a stage aside. "The minstrels are crazy to get her in 'Frisco. But money can't buy her—prefers the legitimate drama to this sort of thing." Here he took a few steps of a jig, to which the Marysville Pet beat time with her feet, and concluded with a laugh and a wink—the combined expression of an artist's admiration for her ability, and a man of the world's scepticism of feminine ambition.

Miss Euphemia responded to the formal introduction by extending her hand frankly with a reassuring smile to Rand, and an utter obliviousness of her former *hauteur*. Rand shook it warmly, and then dropped carelessly on a rock beside them.

"And you never told me you lived up here in the attic, you rascal," continued Sol with a laugh.

"No," replied Rand simply. "How could I? I never saw you before, that I remember."

Miss Euphemia stared at Sol. Mrs. Sol looked up in her lord's face, and folded her arms in a resigned expression. Sol rose to his feet again, and shaded his eyes with his hand, but this time quite seriously, and gazed at Rand's smiling face.

"Good Lord! Do you mean to say your name isn't Pinkney?" he asked, with a half-embarrassed laugh.

"It *is* Pinkney," said Rand, "but I never met you before."

"Didn't you come to see a young lady that joined my troupe at Gold Hill, last month, and say you'd meet me at Keeler's Ferry in a day or two?"

"No-o-o," said Rand, with a good-humoured laugh. "I haven't left this mountain for two months."

He might have added more, but his attention was directed to Miss Euphemia, who during this short dialogue, having stuffed alternately her handkerchief, the corner of her mantle, and her gloves into her mouth, restrained herself no longer, but gave way to an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Oh, Sol," she gasped explanatorily, as she threw herself alternately against him, Mrs. Sol, and a boulder, "you'll kill me yet! O Lord! first we take possession of this man's property, then we claim *him*." The contemplation of this humorous climax affected her so that she was fain at last to walk away and confide the rest of her speech to space.

Sol joined in the laugh until his wife plucked his sleeve, and whispered something in his ear. In an instant his face became at once mysterious and denure. "I owe you an apology," he said, turning to Rand, but in a voice ostentatiously pitched high enough for Miss Euphemia to overhear; "I see I have made a mistake. A resemblance—only a mere resemblance, as I look at you now—led me astray.

Of course you don't know any young lady in the profession?"

"Of course he doesn't, Sol," said Miss Euphemia. "I could have told you that. He didn't even know me!"

That voice and mock-heroic attitude of the speaker was enough to relieve the general embarrassment with a laugh. Rand, now pleasantly conscious of only Miss Euphemia's presence, again offered the hospitality of his cabin—with the polite recognition of her friends in the sentence, "and you might as well come along too!"

"But won't we incommode the lady of the house?" said Mrs. Sol politely.

"What lady of the house?" said Rand, almost angrily.

"Why—Ruth, you know!"

It was Rand's turn to become hilarious. "Ruth," he said, "is short for Rutherford—my brother." His laugh, however, was echoed only by Euphemia.

"Then you have a brother?" said Mrs. Sol benignly.

"Yes," said Rand; "he will be here soon." A sudden thought dropped the colour from his cheek. "Look here," he said, turning impulsively upon Sol, "I have a brother, a twin brother. It couldn't be him——"

Sol was conscious of a significant feminine pressure on his right arm. He was equal to the emergency. "I think not," he said dubiously, "unless your brother's hair is much darker than yours. Yes! now I look at you, yours is brown. He has a mole on his right cheek—hasn't he?"

The red came quickly back to Rand's boyish face. He laughed. "No, sir; my brother's hair is, if anything, a shade lighter than mine; and nary mole! Come along!"

And leading the way, Rand disclosed the narrow steps winding down to the shelf on which the cabin hung. "Be careful," said Rand, taking the now unresisting hand of the Marysville Pet as they descended: "a step that way, and down you go, two thousand feet on the top of a pine-tree."

But the girl's slight cry of alarm was presently changed to one of unaffected pleasure, as they stood on the rocky platform. "It isn't a house; it's a *nest*, and the loveliest!" said Euphemia breathlessly.

"It's a scene! a perfect scene, sir!" said Sol, enraptured. "I shall take the liberty of bringing my scene-painter to sketch it, some day. It would do for 'The Mountaineer's Bride' superbly, or," continued the little man, warming through the blue-black border of his face with professional enthusiasm, "it's enough to make a play itself! 'The Cot on the Crag.' Last scene—moonlight—the struggle on the ledge!—The Lady of the Crag—throws herself from the beetling heights!—A shriek from the depths—a woman's wail!"

"Dry up!" sharply interrupted Rand, to whom this speech recalled his brother's half-forgotten strangeness. "Look at the prospect."

In the full noon of a cloudless day, beneath them a tumultuous sea of pines surged, heaved, rode in giant crests, stretched and spent itself in the ghostly snow-peaked horizon. The thronging woods choked every defile, swept every crest, filled every valley with its dark-green tilting spears, and left only Table Mountain sunlit and bare. Here and there were profound olive depths, over which the grey hawk hung lazily, and into which blue jays dipped. A faint, dull, yellowish streak marked an occasional watercourse; a deeper reddish riband, the mountain road and its overhanging murky cloud of dust,

"Is it quite safe here?" asked Mrs. Sol, eyeing the little cabin. "I mean from storms?"

"It never blows up here," replied Rand, "and nothing happens."

"It must be lovely!" said Euphemia, clasping her hands.

"It is that," said Rand proudly. "It's four years since Ruth and I took up this yer claim, and raised this shanty. In that four years we haven't left it alone a night, or cared to. It's only big enough for two, and them two must be brothers. It wouldn't do for mere pardners to live here alone—they couldn't do it. It wouldn't be exactly the thing for man and wife to shut themselves up here alone. But Ruth and me know each other's ways, and here we'll stay until we've made a pile. We sometimes—one of us—takes a *pasear* to the Ferry, to buy provisions, but we're glad to crawl up to the back of old 'Table' at night."

"You're quite out of the world here, then?" suggested Mrs. Sol.

"That's it—just it! We're out of the world, out of rows, out of liquor, out of cards, out of bad company, out of temptation. Cussedness and foolishness hez got to follow us up here to find us, and there's too many ready to climb down to them things to tempt 'em to come up to us."

There was a little boyish conceit in his tone, as he stood there, not altogether unbecoming his fresh colour and simplicity. Yet when his eyes met those of Miss Euphemia, he coloured, he hardly knew why, and the young lady herself blushed rosily.

When the neat cabin, with its decorated walls, and squirrel and wild cat skins, were duly admired, the luncheon-basket of the Saunders party was reinforced by provisions from Rand's larder, and spread upon the ledge; the dimensions of the cabin

not admitting four. Under the potent influence of a bottle, Sol became hilarious and professional. The "Pet" was induced to favour the company with a recitation, and, under the plea of teaching Rand, to perform the clog-dance with both gentlemen. Then there was an interval, in which Rand and Euphemia wandered a little way down the mountain side to gather laurel, leaving Mr. Sol to his *siesta* on a rock, and Mrs. Sol to take some knitting from the basket, and sit beside him.

When Rand and his companion had disappeared, Mrs. Sol nudged her sleeping partner. "Do you think that *was* the brother?"

Sol yawned. "Sure of it. They're as like as two peas, in looks."

"Why didn't you tell him so, then?"

"Will you tell me, my dear, why you stopped me when I began?"

"Because something was said about Ruth being here, and I supposed Ruth was a woman, and perhaps Pinkney's wife, and knew you'd be putting your foot in it by talking of that other woman. I supposed it was for fear of that he denied knowing you."

"Well, when *he*,—this Rand,—told me he had a twin brother, he looked so frightened that I knew he knew nothing of his brother's doings with that woman, and I threw him off the scent. He's a good fellow, but awfully green, and I didn't want to worry him with tales. I like him, and I think Phemie does too."

"Nonsense! He's a conceited prig! Did you hear his sermon on the world and its temptations? I wonder if he thought temptation had come up to him in the person of us professionals, out on a picnic. I think it was positively rude."

"My dear ~~woman~~, you're always seeing slights

and insults. I tell you, he's taken a shine to Phemie, and he's as good as four seats and a bouquet to that child next Wednesday evening. To say nothing of the *éclat* of getting this St. Simeon—what do you call him—Stalactites?"

"Stylites," suggested Mrs. Sol.

"Stylites, off from his pillar here. I'll have a paragraph in the paper, that the hermit crabs of Table Mountain——"

"Don't be a fool, Sol!"

"The hermit twins of Table Mountain bespoke the chaste performance."

"One of 'them being the protector of the well-known Mornie Nixon," responded Mrs. Sol, viciously accenting the name with her knitting-needles.

"Rosey, you're unjust. You're prejudiced by the reports of the town. Mr. Pinkney's interest in her may be a purely artistic one—although mistaken. She'll never make a good variety-actress—she's too heavy. And the boys don't give her a fair show. No woman can make a *début* in my version of 'Somnambula,' and have the front row in the pit say to her, in the sleep-walking scene, 'You're out rather late, Mornie. Kinder forgot to put on your things, didn't you? Mother sick, I suppose, and you're goin' for more gin? Hurry along, or you'll ketch it when ye get home.' Why, you couldn't do it yourself, Rosey!"

To which Mrs. Sol's illogical climax was that, "bad as Rutherford might be—this Sunday-school superintendent, Rand, was worse."

Rand and his companion returned late, but in high spirits. There was an unnecessary effusiveness in the way in which Euphemia kissed Mrs. Sol—the one woman present, who *understood*, and was to be propitiated—which did not tend to increase Mrs. Sol's good humour. She had her basket

packed already for departure, and even the earnest solicitation of Rand, that they would defer their going until sunset, produced no effect.

"Mr. Rand—Mr. Pinkney, I mean, says the sunsets here are so lovely," pleaded Euphemia.

"There is a rehearsal at seven o'clock, and we have no time to lose," said Mrs. Sol significantly.

"I forgot to say," said the Marysville Pet, timidly glancing at Mrs. Sol, "that Mr. Rand says he will bring his brother on Wednesday night, and wants four seats in front, so as not to be crowded."

Sol shook the young man's hand warmly. "You'll not regret it, sir; it's a surprising, a remarkable performance."

"I'd like to go a piece down the mountain with you," said Rand with evident sincerity, looking at Miss Euphemia; "but Ruth isn't here yet, and we make a rule never to leave the place alone. I'll show you the slide: it's the quickest way to go down. If you meet any one who looks like me, and talks like me, call him 'Ruth,' and tell him I'm waitin' for him yer."

Miss Phemia, the last to go, standing on the verge of the declivity, here remarked, with a dangerous smile, that if she met any one who bore that resemblance, she might be tempted to keep him with her—a playfulness that brought the ready colour to Rand's cheek. When she added to this the greater audacity of kissing her hand to him, the young hermit actually turned away in sheer embarrassment. When he looked around again, she was gone, and for the first time in his experience, the mountain seemed barren and lonely.

The too sympathetic reader who would rashly deduce from this any newly awakened sentiment in the virgin heart of Rand, would quite misapprehend that peculiar young man. That singular

mixture of boyish inexperience and mature doubt and disbelief, which was partly the result of his temperament and partly of his cloistered life on the mountain, made him regard his late companions, now that they were gone, and his intimacy with them, with remorseful distrust. The mountain was barren and lonely, because it was no longer *his*. It had become a part of the great world which, four years ago, he and his brother had put aside; and in which, as two self-devoted men, they walked alone. More than that, he believed he had acquired some understanding of the temptations that assailed his brother, and the poor little vanities of the "Marysville Pet" were transformed into the blandishments of a Circe. Rand, who would have succumbed to a wicked, superior woman, believed he was a saint in withstanding the foolish weakness of a simple one.

He did not resume his work that day. He paced the mountain, anxiously awaiting his brother's return, and eager to relate his experiences. He would go with him to the dramatic entertainment; from his example and wisdom Ruth should learn how easily temptation might be overcome. But, first of all, there should be the fullest exchange of confidences and explanations. The old rule should be rescinded for once—the old discussion in regard to Mornie re-opened; and Rand, having convinced his brother of error, would generously extend his forgiveness.

The sun sank redly. Lingering long upon the ledge before their cabin, it at last slipped away almost imperceptibly, leaving Rand still wrapt in reverie. Darkness, the smoke of distant fires in the woods, and the faint evening incense of the pines crept slowly up, but Ruth came not. The moon rose—a silver gleam on the further ridge; and

Rand, becoming uneasy at his brother's prolonged absence, resolved to break another custom and leave the summit, to seek him on the trail. He buckled on his revolver, seized his gun, when a cry from the depths arrested him. He leaned over the ledge and listened. Again the cry arose, and this time more distinctly. He held his breath; the blood settled around his heart in superstitious terror. It was the wailing voice of a woman!

"Ruth! Ruth! for God's sake come and help me!"

The blood flew back hotly to Rand's check. It was Mornie's voice! By leaning over the ledge he could distinguish something moving along the almost precipitous face of the cliff, where an abandoned trail, long since broken off and disrupted by the fall of a portion of the ledge, stopped abruptly, a hundred feet below him. Rand knew the trail, a dangerous one always; in its present condition a single misstep would be fatal. Would she make that misstep? He shook off a horrible temptation that seemed to be sealing his lips and paralyzing his limbs, and almost screamed to her, "Drop on your face, hang on to the *chapparral*, and don't move!" In another instant, with a coil of rope around his arm, he was dashing down the almost perpendicular "slide." When he had nearly reached the level of the abandoned trail, he fastened one end of the rope to a jutting splinter of granite, and began to "lay out," and work his way laterally along the face of the mountain. Presently he struck the regular trail at the point from which the woman must have diverged.

"It is Rand!" she said, without lifting her head.

"It is," replied Rand coldly. "Pass the rope under your arms, and I'll get you back to the trail."

"Where is Ruth?" she demanded again, without moving. She was trembling, but with excitement rather than fear.

"I don't know," returned Rand impatiently. "Come! the ledge is already crumbling beneath our feet."

"Let it crumble!" said the woman passionately.

Rand surveyed her with profound disgust, then passed the rope around her waist, and half lifted, half swung her from her feet. In a few moments she began to mechanically help herself, and permitted him to guide her to a place of safety. That reached, she sank down again.

The rising moon shone full upon her face and figure. Through his growing indignation Rand was still impressed and even startled with the change the few last months had wrought upon her. In place of the silly, fanciful, half-hysterical hoyden whom he had known, a matured woman, strong in passionate self-will, fascinating in a kind of wild savage beauty, looked up at him as if to read his very soul.

"What are you staring at?" she said finally. "Why don't you help me on?"

"Where do you want to go?" said Rand quietly.

"Where!—up there!"—she pointed savagely to the top of the mountain,—"*to him!* Where else should I go?" she said, with a bitter laugh.

"I've told you he wasn't there," said Rand roughly. "He hasn't returned."

"I'll wait for him!—do you hear?—wait for him! Stay there till he comes! If you won't help me, I'll go alone!"

She made a step forward, but faltered, staggered, and was obliged to lean against the mountain for support. Stains of travel were on her dress; lines of fatigue and pain, and traces of burning passionate

tears, were on her face; her black hair flowed from beneath her gaudy bonnet; and, shamed out of his brutality, Rand placed his strong arm round her waist, and, half carrying, half supporting her, began the ascent. Her head dropped wearily on his shoulder; her arm encircled his neck; her hair, as if caressingly, lay across his breast and hands; her grateful eyes were close to his, her breath was upon his cheek; and yet his only consciousness was of the possibly ludicrous figure he might present to his brother should he meet him with Mornie Nixon in his arms. Not a word was spoken by either till they reached the summit. Relieved at finding his brother still absent, he turned not unkindly toward the helpless figure on his arm. "I don't see what makes Ruth so late," he said. "He's always here by sundown. Perhaps——"

"Perhaps he knows I'm here," said Mornie, with a bitter laugh.

"I didn't say that," said Rand, "and I don't think it. What I meant was, he might have met a party that was picnicking here to-day. Sol Saunders and wife, and Miss Euphemia——"

Mornie flung his arm away from her with a passionate gesture. "*They* here! picnicking *here*!—those people *here*?"

"Yes," said Rand, unconsciously a little ashamed. "They came here accidentally."

Mornie's quick passion had subsided; she had sunk again wearily and helplessly on a rock beside him. "I suppose," she said, with a weak laugh—"I suppose they talked of *me*. I suppose they told you how—with their lies and fair promises—they tricked me out, and set me before an audience of brutes and laughing hyenas to make merry over! Did they tell you of the insults that I received?—how the sins of my parents were flung at me instead of

bouquets? Did they tell you they could have spared me this, but they wanted the few extra dollars taken in at the door? No!"

"They said nothing of the kind," replied Rand surlily.

"Then you must have stopped them! You were horrified enough to know that I had dared to take the only honest way left me to make a living. I know you, Randolph Pinkney. You'd rather see Joaquin Muriatta, the Mexican bandit, standing before you to-night with a revolver, than the helpless, shamed, miserable Mornie Nixon! And you can't help yourself, unless you throw me over the cliff. Perhaps you'd better," she said, with a bitter laugh that faded from her lips as she leaned, pale and breathless, against the boulder.

"Ruth will tell you——" began Rand.

"D—n Ruth!"

Rand turned away.

"Stop!" she said suddenly, staggering to her feet. "I'm sick—for all I know, dying. God grant that it may be so! But, if you are a man, you will help me to your cabin—to some place where I can lie down *now* and be at rest. I'm very, very tired."

She paused; she would have fallen again, but Rand, seeing more in her face than her voice interpreted to his sullen ears, took her sullenly in his arms and carried her to the cabin. Her eyes glanced around the bright parti-coloured walls, and a faint smile came to her lips as she put aside her bonnet, adorned with a companion pinion of the bright wings that covered it.

"Which is Ruth's bed?" she asked.

Rand pointed to it.

"Lay me there!"

Rand would have hesitated, but with another look at her face complied. "

She lay quite still a moment. Presently she said, "Give me some brandy or whisky!"

Rand was silent and confused.

"I forgot," she added, half bitterly; "I know you have not that commonest and cheapest of vices."

She lay quite still again. Suddenly she raised herself partly on her elbow, and in a strong, firm voice, said—"Rand!"

"Yes, Mornie."

"If you are wise and practical, as you assume to be, you will do what I ask you without a question. If you do it *at once* you may save yourself and Ruth some trouble, some mortification, and perhaps some remorse and sorrow. Do you hear me?"

"Yes!"

"Go to the nearest doctor and bring him here with you."

"But *you!*"

Her voice was strong, confident, steady and patient. "You can safely leave me until then."

In another moment, Rand was plunging down the "slide." But it was past midnight when he struggled over the last boulder up the ascent, dragging the half-exhausted medical wisdom of Brown's Ferry on his arm.

"I've been gone long, doctor," said Rand, feverishly, "and she looked so death-like when I left. If we should be too late?"

The doctor stopped suddenly, lifted his head, and pricked his ears like a hound on a peculiar scent. "We *are* too late," he said, with a slight professional laugh.

Indignant and horrified, Rand turned upon him.

"Listen," said the doctor, lifting his hand.

Rand listened—so intently that he heard the familiar moan of the river below; but the great stony field lay silent before him. And then, borne

across its bare barren bosom, like its own articulation, came faintly the feeble wail of a new-born babe.

The doctor hurried ahead in the darkness. Rand, who had stopped paralyzed at the ominous sound, started forward again mechanically; but as the cry arose again more distinctly, and the full significance of the doctor's words came to him, he faltered, stopped, and with cheeks burning with shame and helpless indignation, sank upon a stone beside the shaft, and, burying his face in his hands, fairly gave way to a burst of boyish tears. Yet even then, the recollection that he had not cried since, years ago, his mother's dying hands had joined his and Ruth's childish fingers together, stung him fiercely and dried his tears in angry heat upon his cheeks.

How long he sat there he remembered not; what he thought he recalled not. But the wildest and most extravagant plans and resolves availed him nothing in the face of this for ever desecrated home, and this shameful culmination of his ambitious life on the mountain. Once he thought of flight, but the reflection that he would still abandon his brother to shame, perhaps a self-contented shame, checked him hopelessly. Could he avert the future? He *must*—but how? Yet he could only sit and stare into the darkness in dumb abstraction.

Sitting there, his eyes fell upon a peculiar object in a crevice of the ledge beside the shaft. It was the tin pail containing his dinner, which, according to their custom, it was the duty of the brother who stayed above ground to prepare and place for the brother who worked below. Ruth must, consequently, have put it there before he left that morning, and Rand had overlooked it while sharing the repast of the strangers at noon. At the sight of this dumb witness of their mutual cares and

labours, Rand sighed—half in brotherly sorrow, half in a selfish sense of injury done him. He took up the pail mechanically, removed its cover and—started! For on top of the carefully bestowed provisions lay a little note, addressed to him in Ruth's peculiar scrawl.

He opened it with feverish hands, held it in the light of the peaceful moon, and read as follows:—

“DEAR, DEAR BROTHER,

“When you read this I shall be far away. I go because I shall not stay to disgrace you, and because the girl that I brought trouble upon has gone away too, to hide her disgrace and mine; and where she goes, Rand, I ought to follow her, and, please God, I will! I am not as wise or as good as you are, but it seems the best I can do; and God bless you, dear old Randy, boy! Times and times again I've wanted to tell you all, and reckoned to do so; but whether you was sitting before me in the cabin, or working beside me in the drift, I couldn't get to look upon your honest face, dear brother, and say what things I'd been keeping from you so long. I'll stay away until I've done what I ought to do, and if you can say 'Come, Ruth,' I will come; but until you can say it, the mountain is yours, Randy, boy, the mine is yours, the cabin is yours, *all* is yours! Rub out the old chalk marks, Rand, as I rub them out here in my” (a few words here were blurred and indistinct, as if the moon had suddenly become dim-eyed too). “God bless you, brother.

“P.S.—You know I mean Mornie all the time. It's she I'm going to seek; but don't you think so bad of her as you do; I am so much worse than she. I wanted to tell you that all along, but I didn't dare. She's run away from the Ferry, half crazy;

said she was going to Sacramento, and I am going there to find her alive or dead. Forgive me, brother! Don't throw this down, right away; hold it in your hand a moment, Randy, boy, and try hard to think it's my hand in yours. And so good-bye, and God bless you, old Randy.

"From your loving brother,

"RUTH."

A deep sense of relief overpowered every other feeling in Rand's breast. It was clear that Ruth had not yet discovered the truth of Mornie's flight; he was on his way to Sacramento, and before he could return, Mornie could be removed. Once despatched in some other direction, with Ruth once more returned and under his brother's guidance, the separation could be made easy and final. There was evidently no marriage as yet, and now, the fear of an immediate meeting over, there should be none. For Rand had already feared this; had recalled the few infelicitous relations, legal and illegal, which were common to the adjoining camp; the flagrantly miserable life of the husband of a San Francisco anonyma, who lived in style at the Ferry; the shameful carousals and more shameful quarrels of the Frenchman and Mexican woman, who "kept house" at "the Crossing;" the awful spectacle of the three half-bred Indian children who played before the cabin of a fellow miner and townsman. Thank Heaven, the Eagle's Nest on Table Mountain should never be pointed at from the valley as another.

A heavy hand upon his arm brought him trembling to his feet. He turned and met the half-anxious, half-contemptuous glance of the doctor.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," he said dryly, "but

it's at at time you or somebody else put in an appearance at that cabin. Luckily for *her*, she's one woman in a thousand—has had her wits about her better than some folks I know, and has left me little to do but make her comfortable. But she's gone through too much—fought her little fight too gallantly—is altogether too much of a trump to be played off upon now. So rise up out of that, young man; pick up your scattered faculties, and fetch a woman—some sensible creature of her own sex—to look after her; for, without wishing to be personal, I'm d—d if I trust her to the likes of you."

There was no mistaking Doctor Duchesne's voice and manner, and Rand was affected by it, as most people were, throughout the valley of the Stanislaus. But he turned upon him his frank and boyish face, and said simply, "But I don't know any woman, or where to get one."

The doctor looked at him again. "Well, I'll find you some one," he said, softening.

"Thank you," said Rand.

The doctor was disappearing. With an effort Rand recalled him. "One moment, doctor." He hesitated, and his cheeks were glowing. "You'll please say nothing about this down there"—he pointed to the valley—"for a time." And you'll say to the woman you send——"

Dr. Duchesne, whose resolute lips were sealed upon the secrets of half Tuolumne county, interrupted him scornfully. "I cannot answer for the woman—you must talk to her yourself. As for me, generally I keep my professional visits to myself, but"—he laid his hand on Rand's arm—"if I find out you're putting on any airs to that poor creature,—if on my next visit her lips or her pulse tell me you haven't been acting on the square to her, I'll drop a hint to drunken old Nixon where

his daughter is hidden. I reckon she could stand his brutality better than yours. Good night!"

In another moment he was gone. Rand, who had held back his quick tongue, feeling himself in the power of this man, once more alone, sank on a rock, and buried his face in his hands. Recalling himself in a moment, he rose, wiped his hot eyelids, and staggered toward the cabin. It was quite still now; he paused on the topmost step and listened; there was no sound from the ledge or the Eagle's Nest that clung to it. Half timidly he descended the winding steps, and paused before the door of the cabin. "Mornie," he said, in a dry, metallic voice, whose only indication of the presence of sickness was in the lowness of its pitch—"Mornie." There was no reply. "Mornie," he repeated impatiently, "it's me—Rand! If you want anything you're to call me. I am just outside." Still no answer came from the silent cabin. He pushed open the door gently, hesitated, and stepped over the threshold.

A change in the interior of the cabin within the last few hours showed a new presence. The guns, shovels, picks, and blankets had disappeared, the two chairs were drawn against the wall, the table placed by the bedside. The swinging lantern was shaded towards the bed—the object of Rand's attention. On that bed, his brother's bed, lay a helpless woman, pale from the long black hair that matted her damp forehead, and clung to her hollow cheeks. Her face was turned to the wall, so that the softened light fell upon her profile, which to Rand, at that moment, seemed even noble and strong. But the next moment his eye fell upon the shoulder and arm that lay nearest to him, and the little bundle swathed in flannel, that it clasped to her breast. His brow grew dark as he gazed. The

sleeping woman moved : perhaps it was an instinctive consciousness of his presence—perhaps it was only the current of cold air from the open door,—but she shuddered slightly, and, still unconscious, drew the child as if away from *him*, and nearer to her breast. The shamed blood rushed to Rand's face, and saying half aloud, "I'm not going to take your precious baby away from you," turned in half-boyish pettishness away. Nevertheless, he came back again shortly to the bedside, and gazed upon them both. She certainly did look altogether more ladylike and less aggressive lying there so still ; sickness, that cheap refining power of some natures, was not unbecoming to her. But this bundle ! A boyish curiosity, stronger than even his strong objection to the whole episode, was steadily impelling him to lift the blanket from it. "I suppose she'd waken if I did," said Rand, "but I'd like to know what right the doctor had to wrap it up in my best flannel shirt." This fresh grievance, the fruit of his curiosity, sent him away again to meditate on the ledge. After a few moments he returned again, opened the cupboard at the foot of the bed softly, took thence a piece of chalk, and scrawled in large letters upon the door of the cupboard, "If you want anything, sing out : I'm just outside—RAND." This done, he took a blanket and bear-skin from the corner, and walked to the door. But here he paused, looked back at the inscription ; evidently not satisfied with it, returned, took up the chalk, added a line, but rubbed it out again, repeated this operation a few times until he produced the polite postscript—"Hope you'll be better soon." Then he retreated to the ledge, spread the bear-skin beside the door, and rolling himself in a blanket, lit his pipe for his night-long vigil. But Rand, although a martyr, a philosopher, and a moralist, was young. In less

than ten minutes the pipe dropped from his lips, and he was asleep.

He awoke with a strange sense of heat and suffocation, and with difficulty shook off his covering. Rubbing his eyes, he discovered that an extra blanket had in some mysterious way been added in the night, and beneath his head was a pillow he had no recollection of placing there when he went to sleep. By degrees the events of the past night forced themselves upon his benumbed faculties, and he sat up. The sun was riding high, the door of the cabin was open. Stretching himself, he staggered to his feet, and looked in through the yawning crack at the hinges. He rubbed his eyes again. Was he still asleep, and followed by a dream of yesterday? For there, even in the very attitude he remembered to have seen her sitting at her luncheon on the previous day, with her knitting on her lap, sat Mrs. Sol Saunders! What did it mean? or had she really been sitting there ever since, and all the events that followed only a dream?

A hand was laid upon his arm, and turning, he saw the murky black eyes and Indian-inked beard of Sol beside him. That gentleman put his finger on his lips with a theatrical gesture, and then slowly retreating in the well-known manner of the buried Majesty of Denmark, waved him, like another Hamlet, to a remoter part of the ledge. This reached, he grasped Rand warmly by the hand, shook it heartily, and said, "It's all right, my boy; all right!"

"But——" began Rand. The hot blood flowed to his cheeks, he stammered, and stopped short.

"It's all right, I say! Don't you mind! We'll pull you through."

"But, Mrs. Sol! what does she——"

"Rosey has taken the matter in hand, sir, and when that woman takes a matter in hand, whether it's a baby or a rehearsal, sir, she makes it buzz."

"But how did she know?" stammered Rand.

"How? Well, sir, the scene opened something like this," said Sol professionally. "Curtain rises on me and Mrs. Sol. Domestic interior—practicable chairs, table, books, newspapers. Enter Doctor Duchesne—eccentric character part, very popular with the boys; tells off-hand affecting story of strange woman—one 'more unfortunate' having baby in Eagle's Nest—lonely place on 'peaks of Snowdon,' midnight; eagles screaming, you know, and far down unfathomable depths; only attendant, cold-blooded ruffian, evidently father of child, with sinister designs on child and mother."

"He didn't say *that*!" said Rand, with an agonized smile.

"Order! Sit down in front!" continued Sol, easily. "Mrs. Sol highly interested—a mother herself—demands name of place? 'Table Mountain!' No, it cannot be—it is! Excitement. Mystery! Rosey rises to occasion—comes to front: 'Some one must go; I—I—will go myself!' Myself, coming to centre: 'Not alone, dearest; I—I—will accompany you!' A shriek at right upper entrance. Enter the Marysville Pet. 'I have heard all. 'Tis a base calumny. It cannot be *he*! Randolph! Never!' 'Dare you accompany us?' 'I will!' Tableau!"

"Is Miss Euphemia—here?" gasped Rand, practical, even in his embarrassment.

"Or-r-rder! Scene second. Summit of mountain—moonlight. Peaks of Snowdon in distance. Right—lonely cabin. Enter slowly up defile, Sol, Mrs. Sol, the Pet. Advance slowly to cabin. Suppressed shriek from the Pet, who rushes to re-

cumbent figure—Left—discovered lying beside cabin door. "Tis he! Hist!—he sleeps!" Throws blanket over him and retires up stage—so." Here Sol achieved a vile imitation of the Pet's most enchanting stage manner. "Mrs. Sol advances—Centre—throws open door! Shriek! 'Tis Mornie—the lost found!" The Pet advances—"And the father is——?" "Not Rand!" The Pet kneeling, "Just Heaven, I thank thee!" "No, it is——"

"Hush!" said Rand appealingly, looking toward the cabin.

"Hush it is!" said the actor good-naturedly; "but it's all right, Mr. Rand—we'll pull you through."

Later in the morning Rand learned that Mornie's ill-fated connection with the "Star Variety Troup" had been a source of anxiety to Mrs. Sol, and she had reproached herself for the girl's infelicitous *début*.

"But, Lord bless you, Mr. Rand," said Sol, "it was all in the way of business. She came to us—was fresh and new—her chance, looking at it professionally, was as good as any amateur's; but, what with her relations here and her bein' known, she didn't take. We lost money on her! It's natural she should feel a little ugly. We all do when we get sorter kicked back on to ourselves, and find we can't stand alone. Why, you wouldn't believe it," he continued, with a moist twinkle of his black eyes, "but the night I lost my little Rosey of diphtheria in Gold Hill the child was down on the bills for a comic song, and I had to drag Mrs. Sol on, cut up as she was, and filled up with that much of old Bourbon to keep her nerves stiff, so she could do an old gag with me to gain time and make up the 'variety.' Why, sir, when I came to the front I was ugly! And when one of the boys in

the front row sang out, 'Don't expose that poor child to the night air, Sol'—meaning Mrs. Sol—I acted ugly. No, sir, it's human nature; and it was quite natural that Mornie, when she caught sight o' Mrs. Sol's face last night, should rise up and cuss us both. Lord, if she'd only acted like that! But the old lady got her quiet at last, and, as I said before, it's all right, and we'll pull her through! But don't *you* thank us; it's a little matter betwixt us and Mornie. We've got everything fixed, so that Mrs. Sol can stay right along. We'll pull Mornie through, and get her away from this and her baby too, as soon as we can. You won't get mad if I tell you something?" said Sol with a half-apologetic laugh. "Mrs. Sol was rather down on you the other day—hated you on sight, and preferred your brother to you; but when she found he'd run off and left *you*—you, don't mind my sayin'—a 'mere boy,' to take what oughter to be *his* place, why she just wheeled round agin' him. I suppose he got flustered and couldn't face the music. Never left a word of explanation? Well, it wasn't exactly square—though I tell the old woman it's human nature. Ho, might have dropped a hint where he was goin'. Well, there, I won't say a word more agin' him. I know how you feel. Hush it is!"

It was the firm conviction of the simple-minded Sol that no one knew the various natural indications of human passion better than himself; perhaps it was one of the fallacies of his profession that the expression of all human passion was limited to certain conventional signs and sounds. Consequently, when Rand coloured violently, became confused, stammered, and at last turned hastily away, the good-hearted fellow instantly recognized the unfailing evidence of modesty and innocence embarrassed by recognition. As for Rand, I fear

his shame was only momentary; confirmed in the belief of his ulterior wisdom and virtue, his first embarrassment over, he was not displeased with this half-way tribute, and really believed that the time would come when Mr. Sol should eventually praise his sagacity and reservation, and acknowledge that he was something more than a mere boy. He nevertheless shrank from meeting Mornie that morning, and was glad that the presence of Mrs. Sol relieved him from that duty.

The day passed uneventfully. Rand busied himself in his usual avocations, and constructed a temporary shelter for himself and Sol beside the shaft, besides rudely shaping a few necessary articles of furniture for Mrs. Sol.

"It will be a little spell yet, afore Mornie's able to be moved," suggested Sol, "and you might as well be comfortable."

Rand sighed at this prospect, yet presently forgot himself in the good humour of his companion, whose admiration for himself he began to patronizingly admit. There was no sense of degradation in accepting the friendship of this man who had travelled so far, seen so much, and yet, as a practical man of the world, Rand felt was so inferior to himself. The absence of Miss Euphemia, who had early left the mountain, was a source of odd, half-definite relief. Indeed, when he closed his eyes to rest that night, it was with a sense that the reality of his situation was not as bad as he had feared. Once only, the figure of his brother, haggard, weary, and footsore, on his hopeless quest, wandering in lonely trails and lonelier settlements, came across his fancy; but with it came the greater fear of his return, and the pathetic figure was banished. "And, besides, he's in Sacramento by this time, and like as not forgotten us all," he muttered; and, twining this

poppy and mandragora around his pillow, he fell asleep.

His spirits had quite returned the next morning, and once or twice he found himself singing while at work in the shaft. The fear that Ruth might return to the mountain before he could get rid of Mornie, and the slight anxiety that had grown upon him to know something of his brother's movements, and to be able to govern them as he wished, caused him to hit upon the plan of constructing an ingenious advertisement to be published in the San Francisco journals, wherein the missing Ruth should be advised that news of his quest should be communicated to him by "a friend," through the same medium, after an interval of two weeks. Full of this amiable intention, he returned to the surface to dinner. Here, to his momentary confusion, he met Miss Euphemia, who, in absence of Sol, was assisting Mrs. Sol in the details of the household.

If the honest frankness with which that young lady greeted him was not enough to relieve his embarrassment, he would have forgotten it in the utterly new and changed aspect she presented. Her extravagant walking costume of the previous day was replaced by some bright calico, a little white apron, and a broad-brimmed straw hat, which seemed to Rand, in some odd fashion, to restore her original girlish simplicity. The change was certainly not unbecoming to her: if her waist was not as tightly pinched, *à la mode*, there still was an honest, youthful plumpness about it; her step was freer for the absence of her high-heel boots; and even the hand she extended to Rand, if not quite so small as in her tight gloves, and a little brown from exposure, was magnetic in its strong, kindly grasp. There was perhaps a slight suggestion of the practical Mrs. Sol in her wholesome presence,

and Rand could not help wondering if Mrs. Sol had ever been a Gold Hill "pet" before her marriage with Mr. Sol. The young girl noticed his curious glance.

"You never saw me in my rehearsal dress before," she said, with a laugh; "but I'm not 'company' to-day, and didn't put on my best harness to knock round in. I suppose I look dreadful."

"I don't think you look bad," said Rand simply.

"Thank you," said Euphemia, with a laugh and a curtsy. "But this isn't getting the dinner."

As part of that operation evidently was the taking off of her hat, the putting up of some thick blond locks that had escaped, and the rolling up of her sleeves over a pair of strong rounded arms, Rand lingered near her. All trace of the Pet's previous professional coquetry was gone—perhaps it was only replaced by a more natural one—but as she looked up and caught sight of Rand's interested face, she laughed again and coloured a little. Slight as was the blush, it was sufficient to kindle a sympathetic fire in Rand's own cheeks, which was so utterly unexpected to him that he turned on his heel in confusion. "I reckon she thinks I'm soft and silly, like Ruth," he soliloquized, and determining not to look at her again, betook himself to a distant and contemplative pipe. In vain did Miss Euphemia address herself to the ostentatious getting of the dinner in full view of him; in vain did she bring the coffee-pot away from the fire, and nearer Rand, with the apparent intention of examining its contents in a better light; in vain, while wiping a plate, did she, absorbed in the distant prospect, walk to the verge of the mountain, and become statuesque and forgetful. The sulky young gentleman took no outward notice of her.

Mrs. Sol's attendance upon Mornie prevented her leaving the cabin, and Rand and Miss Euphemia dined in the open air alone. The ridiculousness of

keeping up a formal attitude to his solitary companion caused Rand to relax; but, to his astonishment, the Pet seemed to have become correspondingly distant and formal. After a few moments of discomfort, Rand, who had eaten little, arose, and "believed he would go back to work."

"Ah yes," said the Pet, with an indifferent air, "I suppose you must. Well, good-bye, Mr. Pinkney."

Rand turned. "You are not going?" he asked, in some uneasiness.

"I've got some work to do, too," returned Miss Euphemia, a little curtly.

"But," said the practical Rand, "I thought you allowed that you were fixed to stay until to-morrow?"

But here Miss Euphemia, with rising colour and slight acerbity of voice, was not aware that she was "fixed to stay" anywhere, least of all when she was in the way. More than that, she *must* say, although perhaps it made no difference, and she ought not to say it—that she was not in the habit of intruding upon gentlemen, who plainly gave her to understand that her company was not desirable. She did not know why she said this—of course it could make no difference to anybody who didn't, of course, care; but she only wanted to say that she only came here because her dear friend, her adopted mother—and a better woman never breathed—had come and had asked her to stay. Of course, Mrs. Sol was an intruder herself—Mr. Sol was an intruder—they were all intruders: she only wondered that Mr. Pinkney had borne with them so long. She knew it was an awful thing to be here, taking care of a poor—poor, helpless woman; but perhaps Mr. Rand's *brother* might forgive them if he couldn't. But no matter, she would go—Mr. Sol would go—*all* would go, and then, perhaps, Mr. Rand——"

She stopped breathless; she stopped with the corner of her apron against her tearful hazel eyes; she stopped with, what was more remarkable than all—Rand's arms actually around her waist, and his astonished, alarmed face within a few inches of her own.

"Why, Miss Euphemia, Phemie, my dear girl! I never meant anything like *that*," said Rand earnestly. "I really didn't, now! Come now!"

"You never once spoke to me when I sat down," said Miss Euphemia, feebly endeavouring to withdraw from Rand's grasp.

"I really didn't! Oh, come now, look here! I didn't! Don't! There's a dear—*there*!"

This last conclusive exposition was a kiss. Miss Euphemia was not quick enough to release herself from his arms. He anticipated that act a full half-second, and had dropped his own, pale and breathless.

The girl recovered herself first. "There, I declare, I'm forgetting Mrs. Sol's coffee!" she exclaimed hastily, and snatching up the coffee-pot, disappeared. When she returned, Rand was gone. Miss Euphemia busied herself, demurely, in clearing up the dishes, with the tail of her eye sweeping the horizon of the summit level around her. But no Rand appeared. Presently she began to laugh quietly to herself. This occurred several times during her occupation, which was somewhat prolonged. The result of this meditative hilarity was summed up in a somewhat grave and thoughtful deduction, as she walked slowly back to the cabin: "I do believe I'm the first woman that that boy ever kissed."

Miss Euphemia stayed that day and the next, and Rand forgot his embarrassment. By what means, I know not, Miss Euphemia managed to restore Rand's confidence in himself and in her, and in a little ramble on the mountain side, got him to relate, albeit some-

what reluctantly, the particulars of his rescue of Mornie from her dangerous position on the broken trail.

"And if you hadn't got there as soon as you did, she'd have fallen?" asked the Pet.

"I reckon," returned Rand gloomily, "she was sorter dazed and crazed like."

"And you saved her life?"

"I suppose so, if you put it that way," said Rand sulkily.

"But how did you get her up the mountain again?"

"Oh, I got her up," returned Rand moodily.

"But how? Really, Mr. Rand, you don't know how interesting this is. It's as good as a play," said the Pet, with a little excited laugh.

"Oh, I carried her up!"

"In your arms?"

"Y-e-e-s."

Miss Euphemia paused, and bit off the stalk of a flower, made a wry face, and threw it away from her in disgust.

Then she dug a few tiny holes in the earth with her parasol, and buried bits of the flower-stalk in them, as if they had been tender memories. "I suppose you knew Mornie very well?" she asked.

"I used to run across her in the woods," responded Rand shortly, "a year ago. I didn't know her so well then as——" He stopped.

"As what? as *now*?" asked the Pet abruptly.

Rand, who was colouring over his narrow escape from a topic which a delicate kindness of Sol had excluded from their intercourse on the mountain, stammered, "As *you* do—I meant."

The Pet tossed her head a little. "Oh, I don't know her at all—except through Sol!"

Rand stared hard at this. The Pet, who was

looking at him intently, said, "Show me the place where you saw Mornie clinging that night."

"It's dangerous," suggested Rand.

"You mean I'd be afraid! Try me! I don't believe she was so dreadfully frightened!"

"Why?" asked Rand in astonishment.

"Oh,—because——"

Rand sat down in vague wonderment.

"Show it to me," continued the Pet, "or—I'll find it *alone*!"

Thus challenged, he rose, and after a few moments' climbing stood with her upon the trail. "You see that thorn-bush where the rock has fallen away? It was just there! It is not safe to go further. No, really! Miss Euphemia! Please don't! It's almost certain death!"

But the giddy girl had darted past him, and, face to the wall of the cliff, was creeping along the dangerous path. Rand followed mechanically. Once or twice the trail crumbled beneath her feet, but she clung to a projecting root of *chapparal*, and laughed. She had almost reached her elected goal when, slipping, the treacherous *chapparal* she clung to yielded in her grasp, and Rand, with a cry, sprung forward. But the next instant she quickly transferred her hold to a cleft in the cliff and was safe. Not so her companion. The soil beneath him, loosened by the impulse of his spring, slipped away; he was falling with it, when she caught him sharply with her disengaged hand, and together they scrambled to a more secure footing.

"I could have reached it alone," said the Pet, "if you'd left me alone."

"Thank Heaven, we're saved," said Rand gravely.

"*And without a rope*," said Miss Euphemia, significantly.

Rand did not understand her. But as they slowly

returned to the summit he stammered out the always difficult thanks of a man who has been physically helped by one of the weaker sex. Miss Euphemia was quick to see her error.

"I might have made you lose your footing by catching at you," she said meekly. "But I was so frightened for you, and could not help it."

The superior animal, thoroughly bamboozled, thereupon complimented her on her dexterity.

"Oh, that's nothing," she said, with a sigh. "I used to do the flying-trapeze business with papa when I was a child, and I've not forgotten it." With this and other confidences of her early life, in which Rand betrayed considerable interest, they beguiled the tedious ascent. "I ought to have made you carry me up," said the lady, with a little laugh, when they reached the summit; "but you haven't known me as long as you have Mornie—have you?" With this mysterious speech she bade Rand "Good night," and hurried off to the cabin.

And so a week passed by—the week so dreaded by Rand, yet passed so pleasantly, that at times it seemed as if that dread were only a trick of his fancy, or as if the circumstances that surrounded him were different from what he believed them to be. On the seventh day the doctor had stayed longer than usual, and Rand, who had been sitting with Euphemia on the ledge by the shaft, watching the sunset, had barely time to withdraw his hand from hers as Mrs. Sol, a trifle pale and wearied-looking, approached him.

"I don't like to trouble you," she said—indeed, they had seldom troubled him with the details of Mornie's convalescence, or even her needs and requirements,—“but the doctor is alarmed about Mornie, and she has asked to see you. I think you'd better go in and speak to her. You know,”

continued Mrs. Sol delicately, "you haven't been in there since the night she was taken sick, and maybe a new face might do her good."

The guilty blood flew to Rand's face as he stammered, "I thought I'd be in the way. I didn't believe she cared much to see me. Is she worse?"

"The doctor is looking very anxious," said Mrs. Sol simply.

The blood returned from Rand's face, and settled around his heart. He turned very pale. He had consoled himself always for his complicity in Ruth's absence, that he was taking good care of Mornie, or—what is considered by most selfish natures an equivalent—permitting or encouraging some one else to "take good care of her;" but here was a contingency utterly unforeseen. It did not occur to him that this "taking good care" of her could result in anything but a perfect solution of her troubles, or that there could be any future to her condition but one of recovery. But what if she should die? A sudden and helpless sense of his responsibility to Ruth—to *her*—brought him trembling to his feet.

He hurried to the cabin, where Mrs. Sol left him with a word of caution. "You'll find her changed and quiet—very quiet. If I was you, I wouldn't say anything to bring back her old self."

The change which Rand saw was so great, the face that was turned to him so quiet, that, with a new fear upon him, he would have preferred the savage eyes and reckless mien of the old Mornie whom he hated. With his habitual impulsiveness he tried to say something that should express that fact not unkindly,—but faltered, and awkwardly sank into the chair by her bedside.

"I don't wonder you stare at me now," she said, in a far-off voice; "it seems to you strange to see

me lying here so quiet. You are thinking how wild I was when I came here that night. I must have been crazy, I think. I dreamed that I said dreadful things to you; but you must forgive me, and not mind it. I was crazy then." She stopped, and folded the blanket between her thin fingers. "I didn't ask you to come here to tell you that, or to remind you of it, but—but when I was crazy, I said so many worse, dreadful things of *him*; and you—you—will be left behind to tell him of it."

Rand was vaguely murmuring something to the effect that "he knew she didn't mean anything," that "she mustn't think of it again," that "he'd forgotten all about it," when she stopped him with a tired gesture.

"Perhaps, I was wrong to think that, after I am gone, you would care to tell him anything. Perhaps I'm wrong to think of it at all, or to care what he will think of me—except for the sake of the child—*his* child, Rand!—that I must leave behind me. He will know that *it* never abused him. No, God bless its sweet heart! *it* never was wild and wicked and hateful, like its cruel, crazy mother. And he will love it; and you, perhaps, will love it too—just a little, Rand! Look at it!" She tried to raise the helpless bundle beside her in her arms, but failed. "You must lean over," she said faintly to Rand. "It looks like him, doesn't it?"

Rand, with wondering embarrassed eyes, tried to see some resemblance in the little blue red oval to the sad, wistful face of his brother, which even then was haunting him from some mysterious distance. He kissed the child's forehead, but even then so vaguely and perfunctorily, that the mother sighed, and drew it closer to her breast.

"The doctor says," she continued, in a calmer voice, "that I'm not doing as well as I ought to.

I don't think," she faltered, with something of her old bitter laugh; "that I'm ever doing as well as I ought to, and perhaps it's not strange now that I don't. And he says, that in case anything happens to me, I ought to look ahead! I have looked ahead! It's a dark look ahead, Rand—a horror of blackness, without kind faces, without the baby, without—without *him*!"

She turned her face away, and laid it on the bundle by her side. It was so quiet in the cabin, that through the open door, beyond, the faint rhythmical moan of the pines below was distinctly heard.

"I know it's foolish—but that is what 'looking ahead' always meant to me," she said, with a sigh. "But, since the doctor has been gone, I've talked to Mrs. Sol, and find it's for the best. And I look ahead, and see more clearly. I look ahead, and see my disgrace removed far away from *him* and you. I look ahead, and see you and *he* living together, happily, as you did before I came between you. I look ahead, and see my past life forgotten, my faults forgiven, and I think I see you both loving my baby, and perhaps loving me a little for its sake. Thank you, Rand, thank you!"

For Rand's hand had caught hers beside the pillow, and he was standing over her, whiter than she. Something in the pressure of his hand emboldened her to go on, and even lent a certain strength to her voice.

"When it comes to *that*, Rand, you'll not let these people take the baby away. You'll keep it *here* with you until *he* comes. And something tells me that he will come when I am gone. You'll keep it here in the pure air and sunlight of the mountain, and out of those wicked depths below; and when I am gone, and they are gone, and only you and Ruth,

and baby are here, maybe you'll think that it came to you in a cloud on the mountain—a cloud that lingered only long enough to drop its burden, and faded, leaving the sunlight and dew behind. What is it—Rand? What are you looking at?"

"I was thinking," said Rand, in a strange altered voice, "that I must trouble you to let me take down those duds and furbelows that hang on the wall, so that I can get at some traps of mine behind them." He took some articles from the wall, replaced the dresses of Mrs. Sol, and answered Mornie's look of inquiry. "I was only getting at my purse and my revolver," he said, showing them. "I've got to get some stores at the Ferry, by daylight."

Mornie sighed. "I'm giving you great trouble, Rand, I know; but it won't be for long."

He muttered something, took her hand again, and bade her "Good night." When he reached the door he looked back. The light was shining full upon her face as she lay there with her babe on her breast, bravely "looking ahead."

It was early morning at the Ferry. The "up coach" had passed with lights unextinguished, and the "outsides" still asleep. The ferryman had gone up to the Ferry Mansion House, swinging his lantern, and had found the sleepy-looking "all-night" bar-keeper on the point of withdrawing for the day on a mattress under the bar. An Indian half-breed, porter of the Mansion House, was washing out the stains of recent nocturnal dissipation from the bar-room and verandah, a few birds were twittering on the cotton woods beside the river, a bolder few had alighted upon the verandah and were trying to reconcile the existence of so much lemon-peel and cigar stumps with their ideas of a beneficent Creator. A faint earthly freshness and

perfume rose along the river banks. Deep shadow still lay upon the opposite shore, but in the distance, four miles away, Morning along the level crest of Table Mountain walked with rosy tread.

The sleepy bar-keeper was that morning doomed to disappointment. For scarcely had the coach passed, when steps were heard upon the verandah, and a weary, dusty traveller threw his blanket and knapsack to the porter, and then dropped into a vacant armchair, with his eyes fixed on the distant crest of Table Mountain. He remained motionless for some time, until the bar-keeper, who had already concocted the conventional welcome of the Mansion House, appeared with it in a glass, put it upon the table, glanced at the stranger, and then, thoroughly awake, cried out—

“Ruth Pinkney—or I’m a Chinaman!”

The stranger lifted his eyes wearily. Hollow circles were around their orbits, haggard lines were in his cheeks. But it was Ruth.

He took the glass and drained it at a single draught. “Yes,” he said, absently, “Ruth Pinkney,” and fixed his eyes again on the distant rosy crest.

“On your way up home?” suggested the bar-keeper, following the direction of Ruth’s eyes.

“Perhaps.”

“Been upon a *pasear*—hain’t yer? Been havin’ a little tear round Sacramento—seein’ the sights.”

Ruth smiled bitterly. “Yes.”

The bar-keeper lingered—ostentatiously wiping a glass. But Ruth again became abstracted in the mountain, and the bar-keeper turned away.

How pure and clear that summit looked to him! how restful and steadfast with serenity and calm! how unlike his own feverish, dusty, travel-worn self! A week had elapsed since he had last looked upon it—a week of disappointment, of anxious fears,

of doubts, of wild imaginings, of utter helplessness. In his hopeless quest of the missing Mornie, he had, in fancy, seen this serene eminence haunting his remorseful passion-stricken soul. And now, without a clue to guide him to her unknown hiding-place, he was back again to face the brother whom he had deceived, with only the confession of his own weakness. Hard as it was to lose for ever the fierce reproachful glances of the woman he loved, it was still harder to a man of Ruth's temperament to look again upon the face of the brother he feared. A hand laid upon his shoulder startled him. It was the bar-keeper.

"If it's a fair question, Ruth Pinkney, I'd like to ask ye how ling ye kalkilate to hang around the Ferry to-day?"

"Why?" demanded Ruth haughtily.

"Because, whatever you've been and done, I want ye to have a square show. Ole Nixon has been cavoortin' round yer the last two days, swearin' to kill you on sight for runnin' off with his darter. Sabe? Now let me ax ye two questions. *First*—are you heeled?"

Ruth responded to this dialectical inquiry affirmatively, by putting his hand on his revolver.

"Good! Now, *Second*—have you got the gal along here with you?"

"No," responded Ruth, in a hollow voice.

"That's better yet," said the man, without heeding the tone of the reply. "A woman—and especially *the* woman, in a row of this kind—handicaps a man awful." He paused and took up the empty glass. "Look yer, Ruth Pinkney, I'm a square man, and I'll be square with you. So I'll just tell you, you've got the demdest odds agin' ye. Pr'aps ye know it, and don't keer. Well, the boys around yer are all sidin' with the old man Nixon. It's the first time

the old rip ever had a hand in his favour; so the boys will see fair play for Nixon and agin' *you*. But I reckon you don't mind him?"

"So little, I shall never pull trigger on him!" said Ruth gravely.

The bar-keeper stared, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Well, thar's that Kanaka Joe, who used to be sorter sweet on Mornie—he's an ugly devil—he's helpin' the old man!"

The sad look faded from Ruth's eyes suddenly. A certain wild Berserker rage—a taint of the blood, inherited from Heaven knows what Old-World ancestry, which had made the twin brothers' South-western eccentricities respected in the settlement—glowed in its place. The bar-keeper noted it, and augured a lively future for the day's festivities. But it faded again; and Ruth, as he rose, turned hesitatingly towards him.

"Have you seen my brother Rand lately?"

"Nary."

"He hasn't been here, or about the Ferry?"

"Nary time."

"You haven't heard," said Ruth, with a faint attempt at a smile, "if he's been around here asking after me—sorter looking me up, you know?"

"Not much," returned the bar-keeper deliberately. "Ez far ez I know Rand—that ar brother o' yours—he's one of yer high-toned chaps ez doesn't drink, thinks bar-rooms is pizen, and ain't the sort to come round yer and sling yarns with me."

Ruth rose; but the hand that he placed upon the table, albeit a powerful one, trembled so that it was with difficulty he resumed his knapsack. When he did so, his bent figure, stooping shoulders, and haggard face made him appear another man from the one who had sat down. There was a slight touch of apologetic deference and humility in his

manner as he paid his reckoning, and slowly and hesitatingly began to descend the steps.

The bar-keeper looked after him thoughtfully. "Well, dog my skin!" he ejaculated to himself, "ef I hadn't seen that man—that same Ruth Pinkney—straddle a friend's body in this yer very room, and dare a whole crowd to come on, I'd swar that he hadn't any grit in him! 'Thar's something up!"

But here Ruth reached the last step, and turned again.

"If you see old man Nixon, say I'm in town; if you see that ————" (I regret to say that I cannot repeat his exact and brief characterization of the present condition and natal antecedents of Kanaka Joe), "say I'm looking out for him," and was gone.

He wandered down the road towards the one long straggling street of the settlement. The few people who met him at that early hour greeted him with a kind of constrained civility; certain cautious souls hurried by without seeing him; all turned and looked after him, and a few followed him at a respectful distance. A somewhat notorious practical joker, and recognized wag at the Ferry, apparently awaited his coming with something of invitation and expectation, but, catching sight of Ruth's haggard face and blazing eyes, became instantly practical and by no means jocular in his greeting. At the top of the hill, Ruth turned to look once more upon the distant mountain, now again a mere cloud-line on the horizon. In the firm belief that he would never again see the sun rise upon it, he turned aside into a hazel thicket, and tearing out a few leaves from his pocket-book, wrote two letters—one to Rand and one to Mornio; but which, as they were never delivered, shall not burden this brief chronicle of that eventful day. For while transcribing them, he was startled by the

sounds of a dozen pistol-shots, in the direction of the hotel he had recently quitted. Something in the mere sound provoked the old hereditary fighting instinct, and sent him to his feet with a bound, and a slight distension of the nostrils and sniffing of the air not unknown to certain men who become half intoxicated by the smell of powder. He quickly folded his letters and addressed them carefully, and taking off his knapsack and blanket, methodically arranged them under a tree, with the letters on top. Then he examined the lock of his revolver, and then, with the step of a man ten years younger, leaped into the road. He had scarcely done so when he was seized, and by sheer force dragged into a blacksmith's shop at the roadside. He turned his savage face and drawn weapon upon his assailant, but was surprised to meet the anxious eyes of the bar-keeper of the Mansion House.

"Don't be a d—d fool," said the man quickly. "Thar's fifty agin' you down thar. But why, in h—ll, didn't you wipe out old Nixon when you had such a good chance?"

"Wipe out old Nixon?" repeated Ruth.

"Yes, just now, when you had him covered!"

"What!"

"The bar-keeper turned quickly upon Ruth, stared at him, and then suddenly burst into a fit of laughter. "Well! I've knowed you two were twins, but d—n me if I ever thought I'd be sold like this." And he again burst into a roar of laughter.

"What do you mean?" demanded Ruth savagely.

"What do I mean?" returned the bar-keeper.

"Why, I mean this. I mean that your brother, Rand, as you call him, he's bin—for a young feller, and a pious feller—doin' about the tallest kind o' fightin' to-day that's been done at the Ferry. He's laid out that ar Kanaka Joe, and two of his chums!

He was pitched into on your quarrel, and he took it up for you like a little man! I managed to drag him off, up yer, in the hazel bush for safety, and out you pops, and I thought you was him! He can't be far away. Hallo! There they're comin': and thar's the doctor trying to keep them back!"

A crowd of angry excited faces filled the road suddenly, but before them Dr. Duchesne, mounted, and with a pistol in his hand, opposed their further progress.

"Back, in the bush!" whispered the bar-keeper. "Now's your time!"

But Ruth stirred not. "Go you back," he said, in a low voice; "find Rand, and take him away. I will find his place here." He drew his revolver, and stepped into the road.

A shout, a report, and the spatter of red dust from a bullet near his feet, told him he was recognized. He stirred not; but another shout, and a cry, "There they are—*both* of 'em!" made him turn.

His brother Rand, with a smile on his lip and fire in his eye, stood by his side! Neither spoke. Then Rand, quietly, as of old, slipped his hand into his brother's strong palm. Two or three bullets sang by them, a splinter flew from the blacksmith's shed, but the brothers, hard gripping each other's hands, and looking into each other's faces, with a quiet joy, stood there, calm and imperturbable.

There was a momentary pause. The voice of Dr. Duchesne rose above the crowd.

"Keep back, I say! Keep back! Or hear me!—for five years I've worked among you, and mended and patched the holes you've drilled through each other's carcasses—Keep back, I say!—Or the next man that pulls trigger, or steps forward, will get a hole from me that no surgeon can stop! I'm sick of your bungling ball practice! Keep back!—or,

by the living Jingo, I'll show you where a man's vitals are!"

There was a burst of laughter from the crowd, and for a moment the twins were forgotten in this audacious speech and coolly impertinent presence.

"That's right! Now let that infernal old hypocritical drunkard, Mat Nixon, step to the front."

The crowd parted right and left, and half pushed, half dragged Nixon before him.

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, "this is the man who has just shot at Rand Pinkney for hiding his daughter. Now, I tell you, gentlemen, and I tell him, that for the last week his daughter, Mornie Nixon, has been under my care as a patient, and my protection as a friend. If there's anybody to be shot, the job must begin with me!"

There was another laugh, and a cry of "Bully for old Sawbones!" Ruth started convulsively, and Rand answered his look with a confirming pressure of his hand.

"That isn't all, gentlemen; this drunken brute has just shot at a gentleman, whose only offence, to my knowledge, is that he has, for the last week, treated her with a brother's kindness, has taken her into his own home, and cared for her wants as if she were his own sister."

Ruth's hand again grasped his brother's. Rand coloured, and hung his head.

"There's more yet, gentleman. I tell you that that girl, Mornie Nixon, has, to my knowledge, been treated like a lady, has been cared for as she never was cared for in her father's house, and while that father has been proclaiming her shame in every bar-room at the Ferry, has had the sympathy and care, night and day, of two of the most accomplished ladies of the Ferry—Mrs. Sol Saunders, gentlemen, and Miss Euphemia!"

There was a shout of approbation from the crowd. Nixon would have slipped away, but the doctor stopped him.

"Not yet! I've one thing more to say. I've to tell you, gentlemen, on my professional word of honour, that besides being an old hypocrite, this same old Mat Nixon is the ungrateful, unnatural *grandfather* of the first boy born in the district!"

A wild huzza greeted the doctor's climax. By a common consent the crowd turned toward the Twins, who, grasping each other's hands, stood apart. The doctor nodded his head. The next moment the Twins were surrounded and lifted in the arms of the laughing throng, and borne in triumph to the bar-room of the Mansion House.

"Gentlemen," said the bar-keeper, "call for what you like: the Mansion House treats to-day in honour of its being the first time that Rand Pinkney has been admitted to the Bar."

* * * * *

It was agreed that, as her condition was still precarious, the news should be broken to her gradually and indirectly. The indefatigable Sol had a professional idea, which was not displeasing to the Twins. It being a lovely summer afternoon, the couch of Mornie was lifted out on the ledge, and she lay there basking in the sunlight, drinking in the pure air, and looking bravely ahead in the daylight as she had in the darkness—for her couch commanded a view of the mountain flank. And lying there she dreamed a pleasant dream, and in her dream saw Rand returning up the mountain trail. She was half conscious that he had good news for her, and when he at last reached her bedside, he began gently and kindly to tell his news. But she heard him not, or rather in her dream was most occupied with his ways and

manners, which seemed unlike him, yet inexpressibly sweet and tender. The tears were fast coming in her eyes, when he suddenly dropped on his knees beside her, threw away Rand's disguising hat and coat, and clasped her in his arms. And by that she *knew* it was Ruth!

But what they said; what hurried words of mutual explanation and forgiveness passed between them; what bitter yet tender recollections of hidden fears and doubts, now for ever chased away in the rain of tears and joyous sunshine of that mountain top, were then whispered; whatever of this little chronicle, that to the reader seems strange and inconsistent—as all human records must ever be strange and imperfect except to the actors—was then made clear, was never divulged by them, and must remain with them for ever. The rest of the party had withdrawn, and they were alone. But when Mornio turned and placed the baby in its father's arms, they were so isolated in their happiness that the lower world, beneath them, might have swung and drifted away, and left that mountain top the beginning and creation of a better planet.

* * * * *

"You know all about it now," said Sol, the next day, explaining the previous episodes of this history to Ruth, "you've got the whole plot before you. It dragged a little in the Second Act, for the actors weren't up in their parts. But, for an amateur performance, on the whole, it wasn't bad."

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Rand impulsively, "how we'd have got on without Euphemia. It's too bad she couldn't be here to-day."

"She wanted to come," said Sol, "but the gentleman she's engaged to came up from Marysville last night."

"Gentleman—engaged!" repeated Rand, white and red by turns.

"Well, yes! I say 'gentlemen,' although he's in the Variety profession. She always said," said Sol, quietly looking at Rand, "that she'd never marry *out* of it."

VIEWS FROM A GERMAN SPION.

OUTSIDE of my window, two narrow perpendicular mirrors, parallel with the casement, project into the street, yet with a certain unobtrusiveness of angle that enables them to reflect the people who pass without any reciprocal disclosure of their own. The men and women, hurrying by, not only do not know they are observed, but, what is worse, do not even see their own reflection in this hypocritical plane, and are consequently unable through its aid to correct any carelessness of garb, gait, or demeanour. At first this seems to be taking an unfair advantage of the human animal, who invariably assumes an attitude when he is conscious of being under human focus; but I observe that my neighbours' windows, right and left, have a similar apparatus, that this custom is evidently a local one, and the locality is German. Being an American stranger, I am quite willing to leave the morality of the transaction with the locality and adapt myself to the custom. Indeed, I had thought of offering it, figuratively, as an excuse for any unfairness of observation I might make in these pages; but my German mirrors reflect without prejudice, selection, or comment, and the American eye, I fear, is but mortal, and, like all mortal eyes, figuratively, as well as in that literal

fact noted by an eminent scientific authority, infinitely inferior to the work of the best German opticians.

And this leads me to my first observation, namely, that a majority of those who pass my mirror have weak eyes, and have already invoked the aid of the optician. Why are these people, physically in all else so much stronger than my countrymen, deficient in eyesight? Or, to omit the passing testimony of my *Spion*, and take my own personal experience, why does my young friend Max—brightest of all schoolboys, who already wears the cap that denotes the highest class—why does he shock me by suddenly drawing forth a pair of spectacles, that upon his fresh, rosy face would be an obvious mocking imitation of the *Herr Papa*—if German children could ever, by any possibility, be irreverent? Or why does the *Fräulein Marie*, his sister, pink as Aurora, round as Hebe, suddenly veil her blue eyes with a golden *lorgnette* in the midst of our polyglot conversation? Is it to evade the direct, admiring glance of the impulsive American? Dare I say *no*? Dare I say that that frank, clear, honest, earnest return of the eye, which has, on the Continent, most unfairly brought my fair countrywomen under criticism, is quite as common to her more carefully guarded, tradition-hedged German sisters? No, it is not that! Is it anything in these emerald and opal-tinted skies, which seem so unreal to the American eye, and for the first time explain what seemed the unreality of German art?—in these mysterious yet restful Rhine fogs, which prolong the twilight and hang the curtain of romance even over midday? Surely not. Is it not rather, O *Herr Professor*, profound in analogy and philosophy—is it not rather this abominable black-letter—this elsewhere-discarded, uncouth, slowly decaying text

known as the German Alphabet, that plucks out the bright eyes of youth and bristles the gateways of your language with a *chevaux de frise* of splintered rubbish? Why must I hesitate whether it is an accident of the printer's press or the poor quality of the paper that makes this letter a "k" or a "t"? Why must I halt in an emotion or a thought because "s" and "f" are so nearly alike? Is it not enough that I, an impulsive American, accustomed to do a thing first and reflect upon it afterwards, must grope my way through a blind alley of substantives and adjectives, only to find the verb of action in an obscure corner, without ruining my eyesight in the groping?

But I dismiss these abstract reflections for a fresh and active resentment. This is the fifth or sixth dog that has passed my *Spion*, harnessed to a small barrow-like cart and tugging painfully at a burden so ludicrously disproportionate to his size, that it would seem a burlesque but for the poor dog's sad sincerity. Perhaps it is because I have the barbarian's fondness for dogs, and for their lawless, gentle, loving uselessness, that I rebel against this unnatural servitude. It seems as monstrous as if a child were put between the shafts and made to carry burdens; and I have come to regard those men and women who in the weakest perfunctory way affect to aid the poor brute, by laying idle hands on the barrow behind, as I would unnatural parents. Pegasus harnessed to the Thracian herdsman's plough was no more of a desecration. I fancy the poor dog seems to feel the monstrosity of the performance, and, in sheer shame for his master, forgivingly tries to assume it is *play*; and I have seen a little "colley" running along, barking and endeavouring to leap and gambol in the shafts, before a load that any one out of this locality would have thought the direst

cruelty. Nor do the older or more powerful dogs seem to become accustomed to it. When his cruel taskmaster halts with his wares, instantly the dog, either by sitting down in his harness, or crawling over the shafts, or by some unmistakable dog-like trick, utterly scatters any such delusion of even the habit of servitude. The few of his race who do not work in this ducal city seem to have lost their democratic canine sympathies, and look upon him with something of that indifferent calm with which yonder officer eyes the road-mender in the ditch below him. He loses even the characteristics of species—the common cur and mastiff look alike in harness—the burden levels all distinctions. I have said that he was generally sincere in his efforts. I recall but one instance to the contrary. I remember a young colley who first attracted my attention by his persistent barking. Whether he did this, as the ploughboy whistled, “for want of thought,” or whether it was a running protest against his occupation, I could not determine, until one day I noticed that in barking he slightly threw up his neck and shoulders, and that the two-wheeled barrow-like vehicle behind him, having its weight evenly poised on the wheels by the trucks in the hands of its driver, enabled him by this movement to cunningly throw the centre of gravity and the greater weight on the man—a fact which that less sagacious brute never discerned. Perhaps I am using a strong expression regarding his driver; it may be that the purely animal wants of the dog, in the way of food, care, and shelter, are more bountifully supplied in servitude than in freedom; becoming a valuable and useful property, he may be cared for and protected as such—an odd recollection that this argument had been used forcibly in regard to human slavery in my own country strikes me here—but his

picturesqueness and poetry are gone, and I cannot help thinking that the people who have lost this gentle, sympathetic, characteristic figure from their domestic life and surroundings have not acquired an equal gain through his harsh labours.

To the American eye there is throughout the length and breadth of this foreign city no more notable and striking object than the average German house servant! It is not that she has passed my *Spion* a dozen times within the last hour—for here she is messenger, porter, and *commissionnaire*, as well as housemaid and cook—but that she is always a phenomenon to the American stranger, accustomed to be abused in his own country by his foreign Irish handmaiden. Her presence is as refreshing and grateful as the morning light, and as inevitable and regular. When I add that with the novelty of being well served is combined the satisfaction of knowing that you have in your household an intelligent being, who reads and writes with fluency, and yet does not abstract your books nor criticize your literary composition; who is cleanly clad, and neat in her person, without the suspicion of having borrowed her mistress's dresses; who may be good-looking without the least imputation of coquetry or addition to her followers; who is obedient without servility, polite without flattery, willing and replete with supererogatory performance without the expectation of immediate pecuniary return—what wonder that the American householder translated into German life feels himself in a new Eden of domestic possibilities unrealized in any other country, and begins to believe in a present and future of domestic happiness! What wonder that the American bachelor living in German lodgings feels half the terrors of the conjugal future removed, and rushes madly into love—and housekeeping! What wonder that I, a

long-suffering and patient master, who have been served by the reticent but too imitative Chinaman; who have been "Massa" to the childlike but untruthful negro; who have been the recipient of the brotherly but uncertain ministrations of the South Sea Islander, and have been proudly disregarded by the American Aborigine, only in due time to meet the fate of my countrymen at the hands of Bridget the Celt—what wonder that I gladly seize this opportunity to sing the praises of my German hand-maid! Honour to thee, Lenchen, wherever thou goest! Heaven bless thee in thy walks abroad, whether with that tightly booted cavalryman in thy Sunday gown and best, or in blue polka-dotted apron and bare head as thou trottest nimbly on mine errands—errands which Bridget O'Flaherty would scorn to undertake, or undertaking would hopelessly blunder in! Heaven bless thee, child, in thy early risings and in thy later sittings, at thy festive board, overflowing with *Essig* and *Fett*, in the mysteries of thy *Kuchen*, in the fullness of thy *Bier*, and in thy nightly suffocations beneath mountainous and multitudinous feathers! Good, honest, simple-minded, cheerful, duty-loving Lenchen! Have not thy brothers, strong and dutiful as thou, lent their gravity and earnestness to sweeten and strengthen the fierce youth of the republic beyond the seas, and shall not thy children inherit the broad prairies that still wait for them, and discover the fatness thereof, and send a portion transmuted in glittering shekels back to thee!

Almost as notable are the children whose round faces have as frequently been reflected in my *Spion*. Whether it is only a fancy of mine that the average German retains longer than any other race his childish simplicity and unconsciousness, or whether it is because I am more accustomed to the extreme

self-assertion and early maturity of American children, I know not; but I am inclined to believe that among no other people is childhood as perennial, and to be studied in such characteristic and quaint and simple phases, as here. The picturesqueness of Spanish and Italian childhood has a faint suspicion of the pantomime and the conscious attitudinizing of the Latin races. German children are not exuberant or volatile; they are serious—a seriousness, however, not to be confounded with the grave reflectiveness of age, but only the abstract wonderment of childhood. For all those who have made a loving study of the young human animal will, I think, admit that its dominant expression is *gravity* and not playfulness, and will be satisfied that he erred pitifully who first ascribed “light-heartedness” and “thoughtlessness” as part of its phenomena. These little creatures I meet upon the street, whether in quaint wooden shoes and short woollen petticoats, or neatly booted and furred, with school knapsacks jauntily borne upon little square shoulders, all carry likewise in their round chubby faces their profound wonderment and astonishment at the big busy world into which they have so lately strayed. If I stop to speak with this little maid who scarcely reaches to the top-boots of yonder cavalry officer, there is less of bashful self-consciousness in her sweet little face than of grave wonder at the foreign accent and strange ways of this new figure obtruded upon her limited horizon. She answers honestly, frankly, prettily, but gravely. There is a remote possibility that I might bite, and with this suspicion plainly indicated in her round blue eyes, she quietly slips her little red hand from mine, and moves solemnly away. I remember once to have stopped in the street with a fair countrywoman of mine to interrogate a little figure in *sabots*—the one quaint object in the long,

formal perspective of narrow, gray bastard Italian façaded houses of a Rhenish-German *Strasse*. The sweet little figure wore a dark blue woollen petticoat that came to its knees, grey woollen stockings covered the shapely little limbs below, and its very blonde hair, the colour of a bright dandelion, was tied in a patnetic little knot at the back of its round head, and garnished with an absurd green ribbon. Now, although this gentlewoman's sympathies were catholic and universal, unfortunately their expression was limited to her own mother tongue. She could not help pouring out upon the child the maternal love that was in her own womanly breast, nor could she withhold the "baby talk" through which it was expressed. But, alas! it was in English. Hence ensued a colloquy, tender and extravagant on the part of the elder, grave and wondering on the part of the child. But the lady had a natural feminine desire for reciprocity, particularly in the presence of our emotion-scorning sex, and as a last resource she emptied the small silver of her purse into the lap of the coy maiden. It was a declaration of love, susceptible of translation at the nearest cake-shop. But the little maid, whose dress and manner certainly did not betray an habitual disregard of gifts of this kind, looked at the coin thoughtfully, but not regretfully. Some innate sense of duty, equally strong with that of being polite to strangers, filled her consciousness. With the utterly unexpected remark that her father *did not allow her to take money*, the queer little figure moved away, leaving the two Americans covered with mortification. The rare American child who could have done this, would have done it with an attitude. This little German *bourgeoise* did it naturally. I do not intend to rush to the deduction that German children of the lower classes habitually refuse pecuniary gratuities; in-

deed, I remember to have wickedly suggested to my companion that, to avoid impoverishment in a foreign land, she should not repeat the story nor the experiment; but I simply offer it as a fact—and to an American at home or abroad a novel one.

I owe to these little figures another experience quite as strange. It was at the close of a dull winter's day—a day from which all out-of-door festivity seemed to be naturally excluded; there was a baleful promise of snow in the air and a dismal reminiscence of it underfoot, when suddenly, in striking contrast with the dreadful bleakness of the street, a half-dozen children, masked and bedizened with cheap ribbons, spangles, and embroidery, flashed across my *Spion*. I was quick to understand the phenomenon. It was the Carnival season! Only the night before I had been⁹ to the great opening masquerade—a famous affair, for which this art-loving city is noted, and to which strangers are drawn from all parts of the Continent. I remember to have wondered if the pleasure-loving German in America had not broken some of his conventional shackles in emigration, for certainly I had found the Carnival balls of the “Lieder Kranz Society” in New York, although decorous and fashionable to the American taste, to be wild dissipations compared with the practical seriousness of this native performance, and I hailed the presence of these children in the open street as a promise of some extravagance, real, untrammelled, and characteristic. I seized my hat and—*overcoat*,—a dreadful incongruity to the spangles that had whisked by—and followed the vanishing figures round the corner. Here they were reinforced by a dozen men and women, fantastically, but not expensively arrayed, looking not unlike the supernumeraries of some provincial opera troupe. Following the crowd, which already began to pour

in from the side-streets, in a few moments I was in the broad grove-like *allée*, and in the midst of the *masqueraders*.

I remember to have been told that this was a characteristic annual celebration of the lower classes, anticipated with eagerness and achieved with difficulty; indeed, often only through the alternative of pawning clothing and furniture to provide the means for this ephemeral transformation. I remember being warned also that the buffoonery was coarse, and some of the slang hardly fit for "ears polite." But I am afraid that I was not shocked at the prodigality of these poor people, who purchased a holiday on such hard conditions; and as to the coarseness of the performance, I felt that I certainly might go where these children could.

At first the masquerading figures appeared to be mainly composed of young girls of ages varying from nine to eighteen. Their costumes—if what was often only the addition of a broad, bright-coloured stripe to the hem of a short dress could be called a *costume*—were plain, and seemed to indicate no particular historical epoch or character. A general suggestion of the peasant's holiday attire was dominant in all the costumes. Everybody was closely masked. All carried a short, gaily striped *bâton* of split wood, called a "*Pritsche*," which, when struck sharply on the back or shoulders of some spectator or sister masker, emitted a clattering, rasping sound. To wander hand in hand down this broad *allée*, to strike almost mechanically and often monotonously at each other with their *bâtons*, seemed to be the extent of that wild dissipation. The crowd thickened: young men with false noses, hideous masks, cheap black or red cotton dominos, soldiers in uniform, crowded past each other up and down the promenade, all carrying a *Pritsche*, and exchange-

ing blows with each other, but always with the same slow seriousness of demeanour, which, with their silence, gave the performance the effect of a religious rite. Occasionally some one shouted; perhaps a dozen young fellows broke out in song; but the shout was provocative of nothing, the song faltered as if the singers were frightened at their own voices. One blithe fellow, with a bear's head on his fur-capped shoulders, began to dance, but on the crowd stopping to observe him seriously, he apparently thought better of it, and slipped away. Nevertheless, the solemn beating of *Pritsche* over each other's backs went on. I remember that I was followed the whole length of the *allée* by a little girl scarcely twelve years old, in a bright striped skirt and black mask, who, from time to time, struck me over the shoulders with a regularity and sad persistency that was peculiarly irresistible to me; the more so, as I could not help thinking that it was not half as amusing to herself. Once only did the ordinary brusque gallantry of the Carnival spirit show itself. A man with an enormous pair of horns, like a half-civilized satyr, suddenly seized a young girl and endeavoured to kiss her. A slight struggle ensued, in which I fancied I detected in the girl's face and manner the confusion and embarrassment of one who was obliged to overlook, or seem to accept, a familiarity that was distasteful, rather than be laughed at for prudishness or ignorance; but the incident was exceptional. Indeed, it was particularly notable to my American eyes to find such decorum where there might easily have been the greatest license. I am afraid that an American mob of this class would have scarcely been as orderly and civil under the circumstances. They might have shown more humour, but there would have probably been more effrontery; they might have

been more exuberant, they would certainly have been drunker. I did not notice a single masquerader unduly excited by liquor—there was not a word or motion from the lighter sex that could have been construed into an impropriety. There was something almost pathetic to me in this attempt to wrest gaiety and excitement out of these dull materials—to fight against the blackness of that wintry sky, and the stubborn hardness of the frozen soil, with these painted sticks of wood—to mock the dreariness of their poverty with these flaunting raiments. It did not seem like them, or, rather, consistent with my idea of them. There was incongruity deeper than their *bizarre* externals; a half-melancholy, half-crazy absurdity in their action, the substitution of a grim spasmodic frenzy for levity, that rightly or wrongly impressed me. When the increasing gloom of the evening made their figures undistinguishable, I turned into the first cross-street. As I lifted my hat to my persistent young friend with the *Pritsche*, I fancied she looked as relieved as myself. If, however; I was mistaken—if that child's pathway through life be strewn with rosy recollections of the unresisting back of the stranger American—if any burden, O Gretchen, laid upon thy young shoulders be lighter for the trifling one thou didst lay upon mine, know then that I too am content.

And so, day by day has my *Spion* reflected the various changing forms of life before it. It has seen the first flush of spring in the broad *allée*, when the shadows of tiny leaflets overhead were beginning to chequer the cool, square flagstones. It has seen the glare and fulness of summer sunshine and shadow, the flying of November gold through the air, the gaunt limbs and stark, rigid, death-like whiteness of winter. It has seen children in their queer, wicker baby-carriages, old men and women,

and occasionally that grim usher of death, in sable cloak and cocked hat — a baleful figure for the wandering invalid tourist to meet—who acts as undertaker for this ducal city, and marshals the last melancholy procession. I well remember my first meeting with this ominous functionary. It was an early autumnal morning; so early that the long formal perspective of the *allée*, and the decorous, smooth, vanishing lines of cream-and-grey fronted houses, were unrelieved by a single human figure. Suddenly a tall, black spectre, as theatrical and as unreal as the painted scenic distance, turned the corner from a cross-street and moved slowly towards me. A long black cloak, falling from its shoulders to its feet, floated out on either side like sable wings, a cocked hat trimmed with crape and surmounted by a hearse-like feather covered a passionless face, and its eyes, looking neither left nor right, were fixed fatefully upon some distant goal. Stranger as I was to this Continental ceremonial figure, there was no mistaking his functions as the grim messenger knocking “with equal foot” on every door; and, indeed, so perfectly did he act and look his *rôle*, that there was nothing ludicrous in the extraordinary spectacle. Facial expression and dignity of bearing were perfect; the whole man seemed saturated with the accepted sentiment of his office. Recalling the half-confused and half-conscious ostentatious hypocrisy of the American sexton, the shameless absurdities of the English mutes and mourners, I could not help feeling that, if it were demanded that Grief and Fate should be personified, it were better that it should be well done. And it is one observation of my *Spion* that this sincerity and belief is the characteristic of all Continental functionaries.

It is possible that my *Spion* has shown me little that is really characteristic of the people, and the

few observations I have made I offer only as an illustration of the impressions made upon two-thirds of American strangers in the larger towns of Germany. Assimilation goes on more rapidly than we are led to imagine. As I have seen my friend Karl, fresh and awkward in his first uniform, lounging later down the *allée* with the *blasé* listlessness of a full-blown *militaire*, so I have seen American and English residents gradually lose their peculiarities, and melt and merge into the general mass. Returning to my *Spion* after a flying trip through Belgium and France, as I look down the long perspective of the *Strasse*, I am conscious of recalling the same style of architecture and humanity at Aachen, Brussels, Lille, and Paris; and am inclined to believe that, even as I would have met in a journey of the same distance through a parallel of the same latitude in America a greater diversity of type and character, and a more distinct flavour of locality, even so would I have met a more heterogeneous and picturesque display from a club window on Fifth Avenue, New York, or Montgomery Street, San Francisco.





00078226

